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OCTOBER 2000
NUMBER 106

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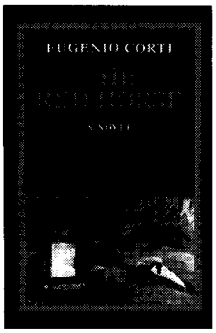


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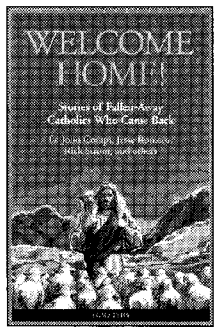


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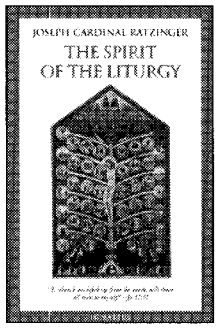


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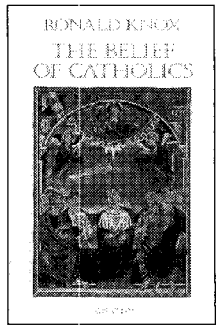


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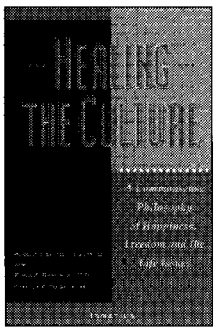


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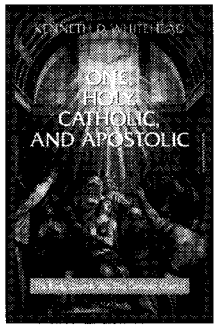


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# Correspondence

## How Intelligent Is Intelligent Design?

Stephen C. Meyer's article "DNA and Other Designs" (April) captures the heart of the scientific case against the materialist ideology that rules biology. Neither physical laws nor chance can write meaningful text (complex specified information). Chance produces only meaningless disorder, and law produces only simple repetition. That is why no one has ever observed natural selection or any other natural process creating new genetic information by a combination of-law and chance; it is every bit as impossible as a perpetual motion machine. Professor Meyer's article will produce angry and baffled responses not because there is any real objection to the logic, but because the aim of biology in the era of Darwin has been to support a materialist worldview rather than to investigate the data impartially. Thanks to Stephen Meyer and to FIRST THINGS for helping to bring that era to a close.

Phillip E. Johnson
Boalt Hall (Law School)
University of California
Berkeley, California

Stephen C. Meyer's article "DNA and Other Designs" presents, no doubt unintentionally, a compelling case for the intellectual desperation of the "Intelligent Design" movement.

Professor Meyer seems to think that if he can show that evolutionary biologists have not yet solved the many problems associated with the origin of life, then he can claim that intelligent design is a fair alternative. Curiously, however, he then ignores nearly two decades of research on this very subject, failing to tell his readers of experiments showing that very simple RNA sequences can serve as biological catalysts and even self-replicate. He follows with elaborate probability calculations showing that sequence-specific large protein molecules would be unlikely to self-assemble on the primitive earth, overlooking the fact that no scientist has *ever* proposed that today's highly evolved proteins were assembled in such fashion.

A reasonable person might well argue, despite strong evidence to the contrary, that the first living forms on planet Earth might have been the product of some act of intelligent design. Prof. Meyer, however, insists on going much further, and here his thesis stumbles from unlikely speculation into demonstrable error. Waving Michael Behe's banner of "irreducible complexity," he flatly states that Darwinian processes cannot produce complex biochemical systems. This claim is simply wrong, as even a cursory search of the biochemical literature will establish.

Lastly, Prof. Meyer allies himself with the curious informational arguments of William A. Dembski, who asserts that the informational complexity of DNA can be explained only by the direct, intelligent design of DNA sequences. Dembski's theories may be attractive, but only to those who are unfamiliar with the wealth of direct, experimental evidence on the mechanisms of molecular evolution. When one can watch new genes, with novel biochemical capabilities, evolve under controlled laboratory conditions, the claim that DNA sequence complexity requires intelligent design vanishes into thin air.

Why does Prof. Meyer find it necessary, despite overwhelming evidence for evolution, to take arms against Darwin? Quite clearly, as he puts it, what is at stake is nothing less than "free will, meaning, purpose, and God." Stirring words, to be sure,



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but absolute logical nonsense. Free will has never been threatened by evolution, and issues of meaning, purpose, and Divinity clearly lie beyond the reach of science, even the Darwinian science he fears so much. If Stephen Meyer wishes to argue for the importance of these values he will have many allies, including John Polkinghorne, Paul Davies, Ian Barbour, and me. However, when he and his small group of friends claim scientific status for their attacks on evolution, the readers of First Things would be well advised to inquire exactly how many papers have appeared in the scientific literature to document "intelligent design." The answer will surprise no one who has followed the development of Prof. Meyer's ideas. None.

Kenneth R. Miller
Professor of Biology
Brown University
Providence, Rhode Island

Stephen C. Meyer's article on design in nature merely confirms an observation that we scientists have about design theory: there's no "there" there. Professor Meyer spends lots of time telling us what didn't happen via evolution. In fact he spends so much time that he can even calculate the odds against evolution happening. What he doesn't tell us is what *did* happen. To say that design produces order because computer programmers create information ignores the fact that we can hire programmers. If Prof. Meyer is suggesting we can hire God, that's a pretty neat trick. Design theory isn't science for one simple reason: there is no mechanism for design. Prof. Meyer spends all of his article saying what didn't happen, as if that's proof of design. What it proves is that Prof. Meyer, like William A. Dembski before him, is parading ignorance as science.

Bob Puharic
Whitehall, Pennsylvania

Stephen C. Meyer outlines well one of the great voids in materialist science: an explanation of how DNA arose as the genetic code. Professor Meyer does a good job of documenting that an inference of design is reasonable when we talk about the origins of the DNA-based biota we know now. Certainly chance is not acceptable if we feel we need to explain how DNA or related RNA life forms could have risen, full-blown, as a coding system. But, as a chemist, I think there are flaws in his argument, both at the level of basic chemistry and in philosophical terms.

Prof. Meyer is implying more than he should about the way we understand the operation of the coding system in the evolution of species, including our own. Few scientists feel there is a problem in understanding how chance mutations and natural selection explain changes in the genetic code. Chance, not design, is also a reasonable inference when we notice that the genetic code of many organisms, including our own, includes astounding waste and uneconomical variation. The full genome does have high information content, but it also has high nonsense content. Is nonsense (including repeats and stretches that do not code for anything used in that organism) a sign of intelligence, or of chance?

To the extent that Prof. Meyer's work focuses on origin of biotic systems from prebiotic ones, design could be an explanation. But I sense that he is building on the same error that is behind arguments based on origin-by-chance: that we can consider the current coding system as a clear indication of the system that was present during the original change from prebiotic to biotic systems. Our current genetic system is based on some robust chemistry, far more robust and successful than any cruder original hereditary system may have been. In other words, we may be looking at only the most successful system, not the original system. And the genetic code leaves no fossils. This is a very frustrating part of a lot of good science: we cannot always access the basic mechanism of a particular event. The answer, in those cases, is to look for more creative probes of the question, not to overemphasize one mechanism that, while consistent with the data, possesses little of the predictive power of a good scientific theory.

I am always wary of arguments that infer anything by induction, and that is what I think Prof. Meyer does when he writes, "Because mind or intelligent design is a necessary cause of an informative system, one can detect the past action of an intelligent cause." All we can say, as scientists, is that mind or intelligent design is the only origin of complex coding that we know of.

Indeed, an inductive counterargument could be advanced for chance in the original code. It is the argument I think most "materialists" would cling to, and I do not think Prof. Meyer addresses it. Specifically, since chance is generally accepted as adequate to explain shifts in that coding, there is a strong inductive reason to think chance may, in ways we cannot fathom right now, have played a role in origin. In my opinion this induction of chance, and his induction of design, are equally problematic.

In the end I think the greatest danger of Prof. Meyer's view is that it invites scientists to conduct experiments that falsify the design theory by coming up with even one counterexample. These scientists would then claim that they had "proven" that there was no need for design. Well, then what? If a chance-based example of an original code were to appear, would our faith in God's design be rendered false? I for one think not, because I do not see that we need to have science on our side to justify our faith in design.

If faith is indeed hope in things—including God's designs—that are unseen, then we should not worry if science cannot see what we know in faith. Faith in things invisible to modern science is important, and we must not anchor our faith on the dis-

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coveries of science, nor abandon it to the possibility of scientific refutation.

Donald J. Wink
Associate Professor of Chemistry
University of Illinois at Chicago

In "DNA and Other Designs," Stephen C. Meyer writes that "the probability of constructing a rather short, functional protein at random becomes so small (1 chance in 10,125) as to approach the point at which appeals to chance become absurd even given the 'probabilistic resources' of our multibillion-year-old universe."

However, no one yet has attempted to estimate what the size of those resources might be, and this is the major flaw, as I see it, in the "argument from improbability," which has replaced the old "argument from design." The larger those resources might be, the less improbable the occurrence of the protein becomes. So the improbability is dependent on one's reckoning of the "probabilistic resources."

Hence, while the chance for a protein being constructed by chance may be very, very small, the difference between those who accept such an argument from improbability and those who do not will lie not in their recognition of how small the chance is, but in their personal reckoning of the "probabilistic resources" of our universe over its apparent lifespan, which is currently some twelve to fourteen billion years.

It is the appreciation of the size and scale of the universe and of our place in it—brought about by the development of modern science in just the last four centuries of human history—that is really responsible for the decline in the popular plausibility of theistic arguments from design or improbability. We simply did not have the means of reckoning—of getting anything like an accurate personal sense—of our place within the scope of things. We on our planet could scarcely have helped considering ourselves the "crown jewel" in the divine creation, given how little we knew of our world compared to what we know now.

Edmund Weinmann
Huntington, New York

**Stephen C. Meyer replies:**

Kenneth Miller's letter makes only one point relevant to my central argument. In his second paragraph he faults me "for failing to tell [my] readers of experiments showing that very simple RNA sequences can serve as biological catalysts and even self-replicate." But Professor Miller fails to tell readers the whole story. In my essay I argued that intelligent design constitutes the best (most causally adequate) explanation for the origin of the genetic information necessary to produce a living cell in the first place. To support this claim I argued that all major classes of naturalistic explanation, whether based upon chance, physical-chemical necessity, or some combination of the two, fail to explain how information-rich biomacromolecules could have arisen from pre-biotic (nonliving) chemistry.

The RNA world scenario that Prof. Miller cites does not solve this problem. Indeed, the RNA world was never proposed as an explanation for the sequencing or information problem (thus my silence about it). Rather it was proposed as an explanation for the origin of the interdependence of nucleic acids and proteins in the cell's information-processing system. In extant cells, building proteins requires genetic information from DNA, but information on DNA cannot be processed without many specific proteins and protein complexes. This poses a "chicken-or-egg" problem. The discovery that RNA (a nucleic acid) possesses some limited catalytic properties (similar to those of proteins) suggested a way to solve this problem. "RNA first" advocates proposed an early state in which RNA performed both the enzymatic functions of modern proteins and the information storage function of modern DNA, thus allegedly making the interdependence of DNA and proteins unnecessary in the earliest living system.

Nevertheless, recent scientific publications detail many fundamental difficulties with the RNA world scenario. First, naturally occurring RNA possesses very few of the specific enzymatic properties of the proteins that are necessary to extant cells. Second, RNA world advocates offer no plausible explanation for how primitive RNA replicators might have evolved into modern cells that do rely (almost exclusively) on proteins to process genetic information and regulate metabolism. Third, attempts to enhance the limited catalytic properties that RNA molecules do have inevitably have involved extensive investigator manipulation in so-called "ribozyme engineering" experiments, thus simulating, if anything, the need for intelligent design, not the adequacy of an undirected chemical evolutionary process. Fourth, synthesizing (and/or maintaining) many essential building blocks of RNA molecules under realistic conditions has proven either difficult or impossible. Further, the chemical conditions required for the synthesis of ribose sugars are decidedly incompatible with the conditions required for synthesizing nucleoside bases. Yet both are necessary constituents of RNA.

In any case, the RNA world presupposes, but does not provide, a solution to the sequence specificity or information problem addressed in my article. For strands of RNA to perform enzymatic functions (including enzymatically mediated self-replication) they must, like proteins, have very specific arrangements of constituent building blocks (in this case, their nucleoside bases). Further, they must be long enough to fold into complex three-dimensional shapes (to form so-called tertiary structure). Thus, any RNA molecule capable of enzymatic function must have the same property of sequence specificity that DNA and proteins do.

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Indeed, such molecules must possess considerable (specified) information content.

Nevertheless, explaining how the building blocks of RNA might have arranged themselves into functionally specified sequences has proven no easier than explaining how the constituent parts of DNA might have done so, especially given the high probability of destructive cross reactions between desirable and undesirable molecules in any realistic pre-biotic soup. Further, for a single-stranded RNA-catalyst to self-replicate it must find an identical RNA molecule in close vicinity to function as a template, since a single RNA molecule cannot function as both enzyme and template. It has been shown, however, that to have a reasonable chance of finding two identical RNA molecules of a length sufficient to perform enzymatic functions would require an RNA library of some $10^{54}$ RNA molecules. The mass of such a library vastly exceeds the mass of the earth, suggesting the extreme implausibility of any chance origin of a primitive replicator system. Yet one cannot invoke natural selection to explain the origin of primitive replicators, since natural selection ensues only after self-replication has arisen. Likewise, RNA bases, like DNA bases, do not manifest self-organizational bonding affinities that can explain their specific sequencing. In short, the same kind of evidentiary and theoretical problems emerge whether one proposes that genetic information arose first in RNA or DNA molecules.

Prof. Miller dismisses my "elaborate probability calculations showing that sequence-specific large protein molecules would be unlikely to self-assemble on the primitive earth," complaining that I overlook "the fact that no scientist has *ever* proposed that today's highly evolved proteins were assembled in such fashion." Here he makes a concession, but states it as an objection. Prof. Miller recognizes, as almost all origin-of-life researchers do, that proteins, RNA, and DNA are far too complex and specified to have arisen by chance given the time available from the cooling of the early earth (or even from the big bang) to the first appearance of life on earth. I included the calculations that I did, not to critique a straw man, but to illustrate why this consensus against chance emerged during the 1960s. (Before that time some scientists, notably George Wald, did, contra Prof. Miller's claim, advocate chance alone.)

With the one exception noted above, therefore, Prof. Miller does not dispute my empirical argument. Instead, he responds mainly by critiquing Michael Behe's argument from irreducible complexity and by defending Darwin's theory of biological (not chemical) evolution. He claims that I "flatly state that Darwinian processes cannot produce complex biochemical systems." But I did not. Behe claims that, or at least something close to it. While I happen to agree with Behe, Prof. Miller cannot refute my argument by citing arguments that allegedly undermine Behe's. (I will leave rebutting Prof. Miller's critique of Behe to Behe, but interested readers may want to know that Behe has responded specifically to the papers Prof. Miller depends upon at several recent academic conferences. Discovery Institute has also posted Behe's responses to Prof. Miller, to the papers he depends upon, and to his other critics on its website at www.crsc.org [also accessible at www.discovery.org].)

Prof. Miller similarly fails to address my argument when he claims that "one can watch new genes, with novel biochemical capabilities, evolve under controlled laboratory conditions." Prof. Miller thinks recent work has established this possibility and thus states that "the claim that DNA sequence complexity requires intelligent design vanishes into thin air." Yet Prof. Miller's wording shows that he has confused the issue. My article challenged the claim that undirected natural processes sufficed to explain the original genetic information necessary to the first living cell (starting in a pre-biotic environment). To talk about "new genes" evolving novel capabilities implies the existence of pre-existing genes in an already living organism. Yet genes by definition contain large amounts of genetic information. Thus, citing examples that putatively document how pre-existing genes can evolve new genetic information, as Prof. Miller does, only assumes the point at issue in my article, namely, the origin of biological information in the first place.

Prof. Miller also objects to my assessment of the philosophical implications of Darwinism and other nineteenth-century materialistic theories of origin. He insists that "science can say nothing about purpose." Yet curiously his own textbook asserts that "Evolution works without either plan or purpose" and "is *random and undirected*" (emphasis in original).

Prof. Miller closes by asking "exactly how many papers have appeared in the scientific literature to document intelligent design?" "None," he answers. But his answer assumes the dominant theoretical framework at issue. As molecular biologist Scott Minnich has noted, scientists who are sympathetic to the design hypothesis see considerable evidence of intelligent design in the scientific literature. Readers might consult, for example, the February 1998 special issue of *Cell*, devoted to the description of biomolecular machines. The question is not whether scientific papers document *evidence* of intelligent design. Many scientists now think that they do. The more important question is: Given the ideological climate evidenced by Kenneth Miller's letter, will scientific journals allow well-credentialed scientists who do see evidence of intelligent design to say so openly in their scientific papers? On this question, the jury is—sadly—still out.

Bob Puharic's letter raises an ob-

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jection that I addressed directly in my essay. He casts my argument as an argument from ignorance because I critique naturalistic explanations for the origin of information without "tell[ing] us what *did* happen." As he puts it, "Prof. Meyer spends all of his article saying what didn't happen, as if that's proof for design." Yet I do say what happened. Specifically, I argued that "an intelligent cause operated [acted] in the past to produce the information necessary to the origin of life."

Moreover, I did not present my argument for intelligent design as a "proof," but rather as an inference to the best explanation. Such arguments do not commit the fallacy of arguing from ignorance. Arguments from ignorance claim that because some proposition X has been disproved, some proposition Y has, therefore, been proved. Best explanation arguments do not commit this fallacy, since 1) they do not claim proof, and 2) they do not just provide negative argument against a range of possible hypotheses (say, A, B, and C), but also positive argument for some alternative hypothesis (say, D, where A-D represent the set of hypotheses currently under consideration). In this case, I not only critiqued the causal adequacy of three broad types of naturalistic explanations for the origin of information, but also discussed the known (positive) causal powers of intelligent agents.

Thus, I noted in my article that "design theorists infer [intelligent] design not just because natural processes cannot explain the origin of biological systems," but also because we *know* that intelligent agents can produce information-rich sequences. As Henry Quastler, an early pioneer in the application of information theory to molecular biology, recognized, the "creation of new information is habitually associated with conscious activity." Quastler's observation suggests conscious activity or intelligent design as at least a *possible* explanation for the origin of information. If, as I argued in my article, no other adequate causal explanation exists, then intelligent design also stands as the *best* explanation. Moreover, we routinely make such inferences to intelligent design because of our knowledge, not our ignorance, of what agents as well as various types of naturalistic entities can and cannot produce.

Edmund Weinmann and Donald Wink challenge my critique of the chance hypothesis. Weinmann argues correctly that "the larger those [probabilistic] resources might be, the less improbable the occurrence of the protein becomes." He then asserts that "no one has yet attempted to estimate what the size of those resources might be." Unfortunately, this statement is incorrect. In the sixth chapter of *The Design Inference* (1998), William A. Dembski, following earlier probability theorists such as Emile Borel, does calculate the probabilistic/specificational resources of the universe. His calculations imply that chance can be eliminated as a plausible explanation for *specified* systems of small probability, where small, on the cosmological scale, is less than $1/2 \times 1/10^{150}$. Dembski's work on chance elimination merely refines and develops already well-accepted statistical methods and procedures. It also simply makes explicit the implicit logic that origin-of-life biologists have employed to eliminate the chance hypothesis since the late 1960s.

In addition to concerns about my assessment of the chance hypothesis, Donald Wink objects to the inductive basis of my argument. While I would characterize the overall structure of my argument as an inference to the best explanation, Professor Wink is correct that such arguments do depend upon generalizations about causal powers derived from (often) repeated experience, that is, from induction. Nevertheless, it does not follow that identifying an inductive basis for an argument makes it inherently weak or suspect as far as practical reasoning is concerned. When assessing empirical arguments the question is not, "Is this argument based upon inductive reasoning?" Most scientific arguments are. Indeed, most laws of physics have been accepted on essentially inductive grounds. We do not distrust them—practically speaking—for that. Instead, the question should be, "Are the inductive grounds for this argument strong or weak?" Prof. Wink effectively concedes that the inductive basis for my argument is strong when he states that "all we can say, as scientists, is that mind or intelligent design is the only origin [cause] of complex coding that we know of." Indeed, I commend intelligent design as the best explanation for the encoded information in DNA for this very reason.

Nevertheless, Prof. Wink expresses concern about the provisional nature of empirically based scientific arguments and cautions against basing religious faith on them. He worries that scientists may later prove that "there was no need for design" and asks, "Then what?" Well, clearly, a decisive refutation of the "DNA to Design" argument would leave theists with one less reason for their belief in an intelligent designer. Conversely, if the argument stands, theists will have one more such reason. Nevertheless, those who insist that faith does not require reasons should have no objection to marshaling evidence and argument that may support some aspect of theistic belief, as long as the conclusions are warranted by the evidence. Such arguments would, at best, provide welcome but unnecessary rational support for theistic belief. At worst, the refutation of such arguments would leave theists in exactly the same position that the fideists say is sufficient, that is, without rational support for their belief. In short, nothing is lost by trying. In any case, consequentialist arguments about what does or does not promote faith do not bear on the sta-

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tus of arguments for (or against) intelligent design. Thus, design theorists are committed to following the evidence wherever it leads, even if it happens to lead to a conclusion with theistic implications.

Finally, I thank Phillip E. Johnson for his supportive comments.

## Just and Unjust Arguments

Keith Pavlischek's review essay on James Turner Johnson's *Morality and Contemporary Warfare* ("The Justice in Just War," May) reveals a kind of puzzlement. He, and presumably Johnson, seem to think there are inconsistencies in the position of the presumption-against-war critics and in the application of that view to real-world issues. The writer and reviewer apparently believe the inconsistencies are inevitable in view of the conflict between just war doctrine and the presumption-against-war interpretation of it.

That, as I see it, is not the source of the problem. For at least thirty years, the left has used the just war doctrine to prove that anything the West in general and the U.S. in particular did was unjust. Facts and logic had to be twisted, and false emphases had to be placed on various aspects of the doctrine as applied in any given case. You will recall that the doctrine was never applied to left/socialist/Communist wars. The presumption against war didn't apply when the subject was national liberation or land redistribution.

Mr. Johnson and Mr. Pavlischek appear to believe that the presumption-against-war position is sincere. I don't believe it is. I believe it is consciously taken up as a tool to oppose any assertive actions by the forces of Western democracy.

Richard A. Aubrey, Jr.
Flushing, Michigan

**Keith Pavlischek replies:**

No doubt about it, during the Cold War the "blame Amerika first" and the anti-anti-Communist crowd seized upon the presumption-against-war interpretation of the just war tradition for their own less than honorable purposes. I'll leave it to the historians to sort out the extent of that influence on theologians, the ethics guild, and the churches. So let's stipulate that some or even many advocates of the position were insincere, dishonorable, and disingenuous.

But let's also stipulate, and not just for the sake of charity, that the position was taken up and advanced by many who were genuinely sincere in their understanding of the just war tradition and its implications for the use of force in contemporary international politics. Johnson's book (and hence my review) primarily targets the statements issued by the American Catholic Bishops, who should be included among the most prominent of the honorable and sincere, yet sincerely mistaken. Had the focus of Johnson's disagreement been with insincere and less honorable opponents, his defense of the classic tradition would be less persuasive and subject to the charge that he was attacking a straw man. But his case cannot be so easily dismissed. Which is simply to say that if the arguments of Johnson and other defenders of the classic just war idea are successful against honorable and sincere presumption-against-war advocates, then that goes a fortiori against those who adopt the position for more dubious and pernicious reasons.

## The Task of Political Philosophy

Pierre Manent's chief complaint in "The Return of Political Philosophy" (May)—at least, one of the few that is clear in his murky essay—seems to be that twentieth-century political philosophers' writings on totalitarianism 1) were sparse, and 2) contributed little to the collapse of first the Nazi and later the Soviet regimes. Though scant evidence is offered for this latter claim, it seems true. (How many political regimes have been brought down by philosophical treatises?) Professor Manent seems not to have considered that the main contribution of recent political philosophy may have been positive rather than critical. The century's last third witnessed an explosion of philosophical writing analyzing and justifying such matters as justice, democracy, rights, freedom, and equality. It is not at all unlikely that some of this more affirmative work helped solidify an intellectual and moral consensus against the Soviet system and its empire, delegitimizing its claims to accord priority to economic rights and people's democracy, and undermining its dismissal of what it derided as merely "bourgeois" freedoms.

Perhaps Prof. Manent doesn't consider this possibility because of the low regard in which he holds "what goes by the name of political philosophy or theory today." Indeed, he imagines that "the twentieth century has witnessed the disappearance or withering away of political philosophy," which "owes its bare survival to . . . Leo Strauss' sole and unaided efforts." Even without the remark about Strauss—which makes it truly laughable—this is absurd. All that appears to lie behind it is Prof. Manent's refusal to count as political philosophy any writing that fails to "include a thorough analysis of political life within [the author's] account of the human world." As with the rest of Prof. Manent's essay, it is hard to know what this means. However, the complaint appears to be against work that declines to base its view of the goals and constraints of political life on a detailed prior elaboration of human nature.

To be sure, much of the best twentieth-century political theory did eschew that, and some of the reasons offered were poor. Nonetheless, its goal of a normative political theory rendered more widely acceptable by its independence of notoriously con-

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troversial theses about humanity's origin, nature, and destiny is not to be despised. More important, there is no reason to pretend that this large body of work (in liberal theory, but also in analytical Marxism, communitarianism, and even natural law) doesn't exist or lacks significance. Prof. Manent may find better argumentation in the works of "Hegel . . . Marx, even . . . Comte" than in Feinberg, Dworkin, Rawls, Waldron, et al. (I don't.) Still, it is a mere insult, and a foolish one at that, to deny that the work of the latter group constitutes political philosophy of high quality.

That many, even all, of modern science's findings are incomplete and provisional does nothing to justify Prof. Manent's contention that science is "meaningless." The view that science's task is to discover, order, and explain facts, rather than offer moral judgments, does not mean that there yawns an unbridgeable gulf between facts and values. (In fact, though Prof. Manent seems not to have noticed, unquestioning acceptance of the supposed fact/value gap collapsed within Anglophone philosophy during the century's middle third.) Democratic theory need do nothing to deny the diversity of human experience, *pace* Prof. Manent, though it certainly questions the elitist assumption that those differences reflect deep differences within human nature and an underlying hierarchy among human groups.

Prof. Manent cannot be trusted to get even the littlest and most familiar things right. Descartes resolves, as an initial methodological procedure, to rely on nothing but the indubitable, therein treating the doubtful as if it were false. To charge, as Prof. Manent does, that the great mathematician and philosopher therein "equated what is doubtful with what is false" is a sophomoric blunder.

J. L. A. Garcia
Institute on Race and Social Division
Boston University

Pierre Manent's florid essay on political philosophy contains a pernicious assertion that bears comment in that it is becoming increasingly pervasive in conservative circles. This assertion is that Leo Strauss is a genuine practitioner of political philosophy.

The non-philosophical character of Strauss' teachings has been demonstrated conclusively enough on numerous occasions. These demonstrations have come from thinkers of such diverse perspectives as Frederick Wilhelmsen, Shadia Drury, and Myles Burnyeat. However, the very notion that one need resort to machinations as dubious as esoteric reading and paragraph counting to recover the utility of classical philosophical thought (following modernity's rather wholesale dismissal of antiquity) should be reason enough to ensure for Strauss a very skeptical reception among those receptive to tradition. After all, the other primary conduits for classical political thought—St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas perhaps most prominent among them—had no need of such devices. But then for Strauss, this is exactly the problem: that such thinkers were so successful at recovering, preserving, and developing the insights of classical political philosophy that their success prompted attempts to instantiate the resulting syntheses in the governance of society.

It would take far too long to adequately show the degree to which Strauss is a postmodern philosopher, and thus, along with his teacher Heidegger, fails to advance the cause of philosophy at all. It is sufficient to observe that Strauss shares with Kojève, Nietzsche, Foucault, and other postmoderns the desire ultimately to end philosophical inquiry. For Strauss this effort takes the form of an attempt to wrest reflections on the political order from their normative grounding in the architectonic realms of philosophical anthropology and metaphysics. Arguably this is for the sake of neutralizing those excessively ambitious to reform society in accord with the Truth. In *Fides et Ratio*, however, Pope John Paul II has amply demonstrated the futility of such an attempt to recast philosophy.

Put simply, even if Strauss proposed to recover the classical political tradition in its integrity (which he doesn't), his project is entirely vitiated by the fact that his "recovery" proceeds not from a philosophy of things as they are in themselves, or a philosophy of being, but from a "philosophy" of philosophies.

It is unfortunate that Professor Manent and those presumably sympathetic with his position have given up on the ambition of penetrating to the nature of things in favor of the ambition of providing some new philosophical standard for the "conservative movement" to march under. One might insist that such despair should not prevail against the hope evident in certain philosophical circles of resuming the inquiry into the nature of things as a basis of the attempt to provide for a just political order.

Albert E. Gunn
Silver Spring, Maryland

I was surprised to read in Pierre Manent's article the following sentence: "Indeed, political philosophy as originally understood owes its bare survival—fittingly unobtrusive to the point of secretiveness—to Leo Strauss' sole and unaided efforts." I wonder if Professor Manent has not made the acquaintance of Strauss' great colleague and friendly antagonist, Eric Voegelin? Surely Strauss himself, who (despite disagreement) deemed Voegelin's approach to classical political philosophy as "toweringly superior to nearly all that one gets to read about Plato and Aristotle," would question the omission of Voegelin in such a summary.

Voegelin's work to reorient the approach to political science in a profound reexamination of the classical and modern literature resulted in the classic *New Science of Politics* and in

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many other major studies. Voegelin is virtually unique among major twentieth-century scholars in the historical and philosophical disciplines in insisting on the fundamental importance of Christian experiences and their symbolizations for any valid understanding of the crisis of modern Western society. Himself a refugee from Nazi tyranny, Voegelin found the impetus for his life's work in the political realities he lived through. He sought to ground political science in a philosophical anthropology enriched by a reformulated philosophy of consciousness. In Voegelin great scholarship and a profound meditative practice meet. Simple justice demands that Prof. Manent's provocative omission be addressed.

C. F. Sills
Greenville, West Virginia

**Pierre Manent replies:**
What a drubbing! What a nice choice of words: "murky," "laughable," "absurd," "foolish insult," "sophomoric," "pernicious," etc.! Instead of answering in kind, I will try to build some bridges towards my angry readers.

1) Many objections rest on the mistaken assumption that I intended to unfold a complete panorama of twentieth-century political thought, with a prize list to boot. Nothing could be further removed from my intention. My main purpose was to try to give a sketch, in the most synthetic manner, of the relations between modern political thought and the experiences of this century. Thus I should be judged on what I said, not on what, or whom, I omitted.

2) Indeed, I deliberately omitted mention of many valuable and admirable scholars. I am thus able to sympathize with my readers: yes, I *was* unjust, and not only towards Voegelin. But it was an injustice I could not avoid.

3) Now, what did I *say*? My inquiry dealt mainly with two great questions that do not elicit more than a passing interest, if any, from my correspondents. First, how did our democracy come into being? Second, how did our democracy go, so to speak, into nonbeing and evolve into totalitarianism or at least open itself to what has been aptly called "the totalitarian temptation"? I understand that Americans are different from Europeans in that they take the democratic regime for granted. They don't willingly inquire about its origins because, as Tocqueville memorably said, "they were born equal instead of becoming so." They don't fear its demise—and accordingly don't willingly inquire about its possible corruption—because their virtues, with the help of Providence, have kept their political vessel on an even keel. But they cannot have forgotten that American might and resolve was needed to free Europe from the scourge of totalitarianism. As a European, I could not content myself with the fashionable policy of "don't ask, don't tell" about the causes, and I tried to understand how democracy could have evolved out of "familial" social arrangements on the one hand and given birth to its opposite on the other hand. To be able to shed light on these two sets of problems forms, in my opinion, the first specification for political philosophy. And of course to fill this bill you need to be able to give, yes, "a thorough analysis of political life within an account of the human world." This view explains why many very respectable names went unmentioned. It is not enough to write intelligently and learnedly of our present circumstances to qualify as a political philosopher.

4) One consequence of these remarks is that John Rawls does *not* qualify as a political philosopher. He certainly is a citizen in good standing of the American body politic, and a very commented upon teacher and writer. He contributed to a revival of the debate about our social arrangements not only in the English-speaking world, but in the whole democratic world. But he *presupposes* the validity, truth, and excellence of our democratic principles and institutions, and so cannot do more than ingeniously tinker with parochial details. What is his "original position"—which nearly drowned the Western world in a sea of commentaries—if not the traditional state of nature but without nature? Professor Garcia admits as much when he writes of "an explosion of philosophical writing analyzing and justifying such matters as justice, democracy," etc. Who needs one more justifier for what he or she already believes? I need someone who is able to free me from the bondage of present conventions.

5) I should have known that simply mentioning the name of Leo Strauss is sufficient in the United States to cause an explosion. I am at a loss to understand why. In my country, which by the way is not a model for courteous scholarly exchanges, Leo Strauss is discussed as a very important contemporary thinker without his critics choking with rage. It is a fact that Leo Strauss set as his purpose the recovery of the original meaning of political philosophy, which among other things included the specifications I have already alluded to, of exploring the coming-into-being and the corruption of political regimes. And he stressed the enormous difficulties attending this enterprise—difficulties that explain why so many distinguished minds content themselves with learned considerations about political things. Mr. Gunn is, I am afraid, mistaken when he equates Strauss' effort with, among others, Kojève's endeavor. If he gives even a passing glance at the dialogue between these authors on tyranny, he will notice that the main objection Strauss addresses to Kojève is that the victory of the latter's philosophy would end philosophical inquiry. Thus, "resuming the inquiry into the nature of things as a basis of the attempt to provide for a just political order," Mr. Gunn's valedictory rec-

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ommendation, is part and parcel of Leo Strauss' enterprise.

## Defining Religion

In his defense of a Thwackum-like definition of religion ("The Very Idea of Religion," May)—which doubles as an argument against the possibility of a scientific study of religion—Paul Griffiths seems to have entirely forgotten his own advice in his *Apology for Apologetics* (1991). Gratuitous ad hominem attacks play a more significant role than do analysis and critique in his dismissal of arguments he apparently finds challenging to his faith in my *Politics of Religious Studies* (1999), and he forgoes critical scrutiny of arguments he finds helpful in Timothy Fitzgerald's *Ideology of Religious Studies* (1999). Professor Griffiths appears to think it germane to the defense of his Christian faith to castigate me for offending against good taste by "describing" my book as "much needed." Not only is the point irrelevant to his argument, and the quoted passage bowdlerized, it is a strange accusation from one whose expression of gratefulness to God for support in bringing his *Religious Reading* to completion suggests divine approbation of his own work. His further claim—without substantiation—that my book is "saturated throughout" with expressions of my own importance is also unworthy of the person he describes in his earlier work as a "proper apologist." However, despite a long list of ad hominem comments from Prof. Griffiths, I must, for reasons of space, dispense with any further attempt at vindication provoked by his "unholy glee in the successful prosecution of another victory" and move on to more important matters.

Constraints of space also prevent me from documenting here the wholly uncritical character of Prof. Griffiths' reading of Fitzgerald. Suffice it to say that his claim that Fitzgerald has clearly shown "that those who have tried to develop a scientific understanding of religion capable of providing the necessary horizon for the discipline have failed to do so" is thoroughly ambiguous, if not incoherent. Obtaining a scientific understanding of religion is the aim of the discipline of Religious Studies, not its presupposition; it makes no sense to talk of developing a scientific understanding of religion as the necessary framework for a discipline intended to provide a scientific account of religion.

My concern in *Politics* was not, contra Prof. Griffiths, with the definition of religion but rather with finding a scientifically credible way of understanding the behavior of persons who claim to order their lives by reference to some supernatural agent or reality. And such an approach, I argue, can quite appropriately make use of the word "religion" as a taxonomic category, and can do so without—like the theologians Fitzgerald criticizes—reifying it. In this usage "religion" simply points to an empirically determinable form of behavior capable of explanation in the same way that other social scientists try to account for other ranges of human behavior. And it is the assumption of the methodological principles of the social sciences that accounts for my naturalism and not, as Prof. Griffiths suggests, a naive and uncritical pseudo-religious faith driven by a hidden hatred for those who are religious.

Prof. Griffiths' claim notwithstanding, therefore, I do not "excoriate" all confessional commitments, nor do I begrudge the religious their commitments to Meaning and Truth. There is no salvific hope in my methodological commitments—no expectation that somehow science will provide a sense of belonging in the universe or rescue us from death and destruction. I claim only that science is undeniably the most successful of all human cognitive enterprises and that if the academic study of religion in the modern research university is to be accounted one of the sciences such a methodological naturalism is not only appropriate but necessary. And I "excoriate" only those who would claim scientific status for their revealed Meanings and Truths.

Moving beyond Prof. Griffiths' ad hominem comments to a critical scrutiny of his "arguments," as my comments here indicate, will show that Prof. Griffiths' claim that students of religion have been unable to escape Parson Thwackum, and that in consequence the scientific study of religion is without a future, is wholly unpersuasive. Prof. Griffiths' further claim that his conclusion is not news, therefore, is false, although he is entirely right to claim that what is new "is that more and more of those who find their academic home in departments of religion and their principle guild affiliation in the American Academy of Religion are happy to say it." Given the Protestant domination of the American university since its birth, and the birth of the American Academy of Religion from the substance of the National Association for Biblical Studies, that claim is more sad than surprising.

Donald Wiebe
Dean of Divinity, Trinity College
University of Toronto
Toronto, Ontario
Canada

In his article "The Very Idea of Religion," Paul J. Griffiths has ably portrayed the current conflict in the academic study of religion. Although he chooses to focus on two carefully selected books, the question whether there is an object of study called "religion," or whether that term should be abandoned as crypto-Christian, has raged for the last few years in monographs, articles, and letters to the editor in all the religious studies journals. Professor Griffiths is correct to portray this as a polarized struggle: between those who explicitly or implicitly assume some single,

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real, transcendental thing underlying all particular religions ("theologians") on the one hand; and those who argue that all "religious" phenomena can be reduced to politics, economics, power hierarchies, or cognitive science ("naturalists") on the other.

The definitional problem about religion arises, in fact, because both sides in the debate use overly sharp categories. People want to find the necessary and sufficient conditions (often they prefer to find one such condition) that make a given behavior, text, belief, work of art, etc., "religious." This creates endless sterile disputes: Is Buddhism a religion? Is New Age? Is communism? Is magic a form of religion or a form of science?

The scholars who founded religious studies in North America, above all Mircea Eliade, insisted on the irreducible sui generis character of religion. This provided them with a convenient justification for the disciplinary autonomy these scholars craved. Of course, over-insistence on such an independent, irreducible religious element made it laughably easy for later critics to show that "religious" experiences and institutions are always inextricably mixed up with politics, social relationships, gender hierarchy, language structure, individual psychology . . . the list is endless. Such critics then think that religion has been dispersed into these other categories, and so has been made to disappear.

The solution, I think, is to eschew the sharp boundaries that got religionists of both sides—the Griffithses and the Wiebes—into trouble in the first place. Instead of asking whether a given movement is "a religion," we should ask whether it portrays "religiosity." This category, in turn, should also be fuzzy, pictured as a bundle of various features none of which, on their own, are necessary or sufficient. For something to count as displaying religiosity it would have to have some small number of features, but few or none of these features need be found in everything described as religious. Thus Buddhism can be religious without gods, because it has things like monks, elaborate ritual, and a doctrine of salvation; New Age can be religious without a church because it has an interest in sacraments and in invisible powers; the religious elements of communism, such as its utopian millennialism or its totalistic vision, can be recognized without calling it "a religion"; magic can more clearly and more interestingly be seen as displaying both religiosity and proto-scientific technique—and so on.

Michael Ostling
Centre for the Study of Religion
University of Toronto
Toronto, Ontario
Canada

While Paul J. Griffiths may be correct that "the very idea of religion" is problematic, there must be a coherent idea of religion for the First Amendment to be meaningful. Tragically, the secularists now have it both ways: secular substitutes for religion may be promoted by the state but anything associated with religion must be excluded from state actions. So in public schools we strain out the gnat of graduation prayer and swallow the camel of quasi-secular religion in the curriculum.

If religion is broadly defined, there is little reason to give it special status and the freedom of religion merges with other freedoms. If religion is narrowly defined, the state may establish something like a religion in secular guise. How then should we draw the line between secularity and religion? Here are two principles that would help.

1) You can't have it both ways: something may be either secular or religious, but not both. If psychology is secular, then Christian psychology is also secular. If stories of human origins are religious, then scientific stories of human origins are also religious.

2) The negation of something that is religious is also religious, and the same for what is secular. If the invocation of God is religious, then the denial or exclusion of God is also religious. If the state may allow a practice on secular grounds, then the state may restrict that practice without becoming entangled with religion.

Thus the idea of religion is no more problematic than the idea of secularity.

Ralph Gillmann
Burke, Virginia

**Paul J. Griffiths replies:**

Thanks to those who have chosen to respond to my essay on religion.

Three points in response to Dr. Wiebe's somewhat overexcited letter.

1) Does giving thanks to God for the capacity to write a book (as I have done) imply that one is thereby claiming divine approbation for everything written in the book? Not at all: it implies only that God is finally responsible for whatever is good in the book. It does not imply that the author is capable of judging what in the book is good. This is elementary theology; not Dr. Wiebe's strong point, obviously. By contrast, does claiming that one's own book is much needed, as Mr. Wiebe does, imply that one has an elevated sense of one's book's importance—and, perhaps, of one's own importance? Well, I'd say so; I stand by what I previously said about that matter. Readers of Dr. Wiebe's *Politics* may judge for themselves the degree of self-important huff-puffery evident in it.

2) Is what I said in my article congruent with what I claimed in an earlier book to be the proper function of apologetical argument? I think it is; but showing that it is would be otiose for those who have read that book (*An Apology for Apologetics*, 1991) and boring for those who have not. So I won't do it here. Again, interested readers can pursue that matter for themselves.

3) The central claim in my essay is that there is no coherent or persua-

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sive defense of Dr. Wiebe's claim in his book (reiterated in his letter) that methodological naturalism is the only proper position from which to engage in the study of religion in a secular university (or, sometimes, a "modern research university"). Dr. Wiebe nowhere addresses this in his letter. I can only assume that he yields the point. But perhaps he doesn't see the force of the criticism? Perhaps his childlike (and altogether touching) faith in "science" doesn't permit him to consider the possibility that methodological naturalism may be as deeply committed to controversial and controverted claims in metaphysics and epistemology as is orthodox Christianity? If so, he has my sympathy, but not my agreement: evidence of weak-mindedness requires a soothing hand and catechetical instruction, but when it reaches this pitch, argument is of no more use. I recommend to Dr. Wiebe's meditations, then, Augustine's treatise, *De Catechizandis Rudibus.*

Michael Ostling appears to think that I'm interested in defending the idea that there is some single transcendent real underlying all religions. But of course I'm not interested in any such thing, and never said that I was. I do think that because the triune God created all things, and is therefore related to all things as Creator to created, He must necessarily be related in this way to all "religious" things (if it turns out to be useful to think that there are any such). But I have no interest at all in translating this specifically Christian talk into vague abstraction of an Eliadean or Tillichian sort; neither have I any interest in defending the category "religion"—as should have been abundantly evident from my essay. Dr. Ostling's letter also provides an apt illustration of the central thesis of my essay, which was that those who eschew theology find it difficult to say what the non-theological study of religion is or is for: his letter shows all the usual evidences of conceptual desperation in this connection.

I agree with Ralph Gillmann that the idea of religion is no more (and no less) problematic than the idea of secularity: the two are in most ways complementary concepts, so this should hardly be a surprise. As to the claim that there must be a coherent idea of religion in order for the First Amendment to be meaningful: Why? I'd rather construe the religion clauses of that amendment as a rough guide for muddling through, and a glance at Supreme Court opinions on religion cases in the last thirty years entirely supports this view. I doubt that it's possible to extract a coherent view of what religion is from these opinions, and since the Court is, constitutionally, the body that tells us what, in practice, the Constitution means, I'm happy to have an undertheorized understanding of the First Amendment's meaning.

## On Moral Education

As a professor of philosophy and ethics who has written two books and numerous articles on character development, has created an extensive online resource devoted to ethics, character, and moral education, regularly teaches seminars on moral education, and, most importantly perhaps, works regularly with the dedicated souls in the trenches of moral education, I was disheartened by James Davison Hunter's very skewed perspective on contemporary moral education ("Leading Children Beyond Good and Evil," May). In all candor and humility, I believe it is fair to suggest that Professor Hunter knows just enough about the theory and practice of moral education to be dangerous—to the extent, that is, that his mischaracterization might discourage decision-making bodies from implementing new and well-planned character-building programs.

Prof. Hunter might have a point with regard to a handful of programs that are unduly influenced by left-wing ideology and its politically correct jargon, but he has misportrayed the vast majority of moral education efforts nationwide.

From beginning to end, his essay rests on the assumption that "inclusiveness is the sacred wood of all moral education." He is correct, of course, insofar as he is suggesting that all moral educators believe there are universal moral values on which we all can agree and on which we can cultivate and build character. But the way in which he couches his discussion in the language of "inclusiveness" is nonetheless misleading in the way it seems to imply that the primary criterion and driving force behind contemporary moral education is that mother of all politically correct values, tolerance. On the other hand, there is this puzzling curiosity: Prof. Hunter criticizes moral education programs for championing what he variously calls a "universal morality," the "Judeo-Christian ethic," or what C. S. Lewis called "the Tao"—all of which Prof. Hunter proclaims "never existed in reality."

Prof. Hunter's portrayal simply does not reflect the truth and reality of the vast majority of moral education efforts. The major impetus for these efforts should be obvious: the virtually ubiquitous distress over the lack of basic moral values within our national culture generally and among our youth in particular, as well as an attendant concern about the various pernicious consequences of the day's relativistic impulses.

What is strangely missing from Prof. Hunter's account, beyond his myopic fixation on inclusiveness, is any mention of or appreciation for the nonrelativistic nature of those "consensus values" so vigorously pursued by communities, institutions, and organizations. Prof. Hunter ignores the extent to which the consensus or inclusiveness of these efforts is overridingly about objective moral values. (Perhaps he ignores this point simply because he rejects the existence of objective moral values.) The goal of these programs is not inclusiveness for inclusiveness' sake; the

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goal is to identify and cultivate objective—that is, nonrelativistic and nonsubjectivistic—values on which our individual and collective lives depend and flourish. In building consensus on essential, objective values, moral educators of at least the last two decades have been conscientiously helping our youth navigate through the stormy seas of our present narcissistic climate, all the while courageously steering clear of the Scylla of moral relativisim and the Charybdis of heavy-handed religious or ideological indoctrination.

Given the gravity of this issue, I regret that there isn't sufficient opportunity here to respond more fully to Prof. Hunter's misinterpretation of present-day efforts to cultivate virtue among our youth. Suffice it for me to conclude that his thesis is yet another species of the argument about the loss of tradition and "thick values" and how that loss helps describe how and why society is going to hell in a handbasket. That may very well be the case—but what are we supposed to do in the meantime? Nothing? Just sit back and second-guess those who are doing their conscientious best to stem the tide of immorality? Sure, contemporary moral education programs are certainly not as effective and optimal as teaching moral values through osmosis within the context of a tight-knit, God-fearing home and community, where everybody speaks the same rich moral language. However, thank God, at least some people are doing something about our moral crisis rather than nothing (or nothing but second-guessing).

Russell Gough
Professor of Philosophy and Ethics
Pepperdine University
Malibu, California

**James Davison Hunter replies:**
Professor Gough's efforts—like those of so many other Americans passionately concerned with stemming "the tide of immorality"—are earnest and conscientious. In *The Death of Character* (the book from which my essay was taken), the last thing I do is second-guess the motives of such well-meaning people. What I do aspire to is to examine historical roots, the changing social organization, and evolving philosophical assumptions that define the reigning strategies of moral education today. In our present moment, one discovers a thoroughly institutionalized paradigm of moral understanding and interpretation within which we formally and informally socialize our children. I use the term paradigm in the way that Thomas Kuhn intended for his theory of normal science and scientific change—it is an accepted model of understanding and inquiry defined by common assumptions, rules, and social practices. For all of the variation we see in contemporary moral pedagogy, there are definable patterns and tendencies at work that comprise an underlying consensus, one strong enough to suppress innovation when innovation is subversive to the basic commitments of the paradigm. This paradigm, I contend, is defined by the assumptions and ideals of romantic modernism.

The hallmark of romantic modernism, as I pointed out in my essay, was and is a morality of abstract universals, a Neoplatonic morality disengaged from history, culture, and society. It is in its uncritical embrace of inclusivity that one finds an elective affinity between all of the strategies of moral education today and romantic modernism. This is patently true for the psychological strategies but it is no less true (even if less obviously so) for the alternative neoclassical strategy that Prof. Gough advocates.

The consequences are significant. What Prof. Gough and the defenders of the neoclassical strategy advocate, in effect, are the forms and outcomes of traditional morality without the substance of particular religious sanctions. In the same way, what the advocates of the communitarian strategy champion is the moral integration of traditional community and the compact that makes that possible without the complex and often suffocating communal dependencies built into traditional community. A morality conceptualized without basic links to a living creed and a lived community means that the morality espoused entails few if any psychic costs; it lacks the social and spiritual sanctions that can make morality binding on our conscience and behavior. It is true that advocates of these strategies advocate "objective" morality. And yet without the grounding of particular creeds and communities, such morality can be advocated only as vacuous platitudes. (This is why we end up with "virtue of the month" programs and "ethical fitness" seminars.) Advocates of the neoclassical and communitarian strategies want virtue, to be sure, but given the normative framework within which they operate, it ends up being, at best, virtue on the cheap.

At the end of the day, the issue is not the "objectivity" of morality against "the Scylla of moral relativism." Rather the issue is how objective morality becomes authoritative, such that it becomes binding on the conscience and compelling within communities. Moral authority, I would contend, cannot be established simply by recognizing, building, or asserting "consensus values." Likewise, character cannot develop out of values "chosen" by a committee, negotiated by a group of educators, or enacted into law by legislators. Such values, by their very nature, lack the qualities of sacredness and commanding character, and thus the power to inspire and to shame.

I do not gainsay the commitment of those engaged in moral education to do well by children. I am glad that there are people like Prof. Gough who express that commitment in life and vocation. At the same time, it is essential to recognize that the strategy he advocates and defends is part and parcel of a larger paradigm that is fundamentally flawed—so much so that it is incapable of bringing about the ends it has set for itself.

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The point, then, is not "to do nothing"—as though this is our only alternative. Rather, the point is to understand the reigning paradigm of moral education in all of its depth, complexity, and institutional power—and to challenge it. This challenge will require more than a reform of moral education, for moral education is inextricably bound to the moral culture within which it is found. A more fundamental question is how moral cultures change and what, if anything, people might do to influence that change in ways that secure benevolence and justice in a highly diverse society. This will entail a basic rethinking of the relationships between faith, moral commitment, family, childrearing, education, public life and democratic institutions—and then finding ways to "thicken" our commitments in each. Moral education strategies, it seems to me, will follow in turn.

## Another Conversion Story

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's "A Conversion Story" (April) produced a variety of reflections in me. I am a historian as is she, also an adult convert to Catholicism, and similarly found my conversion greeted with polite silence. The silence was, indeed, polite because casual expressions of anti-Catholic bigotry were (and are) chronic among the scholars with whom I deal and only politeness stifled disappointment or disapproval.

While only a minority of scholars utter slighting remarks about believing Christians in general and Catholics in particular, the majority readily greet such remarks with appreciative chuckles—such as the ones I heard at several recent informal academic gatherings in response to the witticism that "Catholic higher education," like "military intelligence," is an oxymoron. At a casual dinner I attended with some local academics a while back one of those present, a professor whom I had only just met and was, I presume, unaware of my beliefs, ridiculed *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* and with glee told those at the table that administrators at his Catholic school had privately assured him that adherence to the policy would be only symbolic. Perhaps I should have confronted him about his scorn for his school's religious orientation, but in fact I resorted to the same polite silence with which my academic acquaintances greeted my conversion.

I was also struck by Professor Fox-Genovese's remark that "an important part of what opened me to Catholicism—and to the peerless gift of faith in Christ Jesus—was my growing horror at the pride of too many in the secular academy." As I look back on it, I did not seriously question my long held philosophical agnosticism and slighting attitude toward believing Christians until I realized that intellectual pride lay behind much of the butchery, misery, and folly in human history. Only when I realized that humanity could not save itself was I able to consider that it, and I, needed Christ's help. And, finally, I too did not experience any blinding flashes on the road to Damascus. I have always felt some envy of those who report such experiences; it would be, I have felt, satisfying. But for me it was an undramatic, slow, and occasionally difficult intellectual and emotional reconsideration, with a good bit of back and forthing, until in the end I knew I believed.

John Earl Haynes
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THIS TIME

# Whistling Dixie

*James Nuechterlein*

Judging from the public face it presented at its convention in Philadelphia in early August, the Republican party is made up disproportionately of people of color and plucky survivors of an astonishing range of physical disabilities and random acts of God. That seems to be the way we do politics now. I write just as the Democrats convene in Los Angeles, and, based on past performance, there is no reason to expect that they will allow themselves to be outdone as equal opportunity panderers.

Most political observers were more amused than offended by the GOP's display of diversity run amok. Indeed, one might see in the convention's endless parade of black speakers, black choirs, and black schoolchildren an exercise that, despite its dabbling in hypocrisy, was more benign than not. What's wrong, after all, with a party indicating that it wishes it had more minority support than it does? What would critics have made of a Republican convention devoid of a significant black presence?

But a number of commentators did not take kindly to the Republicans' rainbow coalition. In the news columns of the *New York Times*, for example, R. W. Apple, Jr. expressed skepticism, and his colleagues on the editorial and op-ed pages, Brent Staples and Bob Herbert, fumed in outrage. Behind the facade of racial inclusiveness they see a party still wedded to the "Southern Strategy" supposedly invented by Richard Nixon in 1968 and adhered to by his successors ever since. As David Greenberg, writing in the online magazine *Slate*, puts it, "Richard Nixon's successful 'Southern Strategy' of 1968 became the blueprint for Ronald Reagan's southern inroads and Lee Atwater and George Bush's Willie Hortonism." In the common telling, that strategy—variously described by critics as "notorious," "sinister," or simply "racist"—allowed the GOP to appeal to the fears of white southerners in the wake of school desegregation and the civil rights bills of the 1960s and thereby gain political ascendancy in the South.

The phrase is by now a reflexive one, and is invoked by political analysts as a straightforward and unproblematic datum of modern political history. But the phenomenon the phrase describes is not nearly so simple, nor so morally tainted, as is commonly supposed. It is true that prior to the 1960s the southern states were unanimously Democratic in their voting habits and after that became more Republican than not. It is also true that that switch in voting behavior has allowed the GOP to improve its situation in Congress and begin each presidential campaign with an important advantage. But what came to fruition in the sixties had a long and complicated background, and its working out is understood best not as a morality tale in reverse but as an ironic lesson in the vagaries of politics.

The origins of the Democratic Solid South are well known. Following the abolition of slavery during the Civil War and the subsequent imposition on the South of "Black Reconstruction" by the victorious Republican North, white southerners were determined to reconstitute an impregnable system of racial supremacy. For a variety of reasons, some of them clearly racist, the North acquiesced as the South developed, following the end of Reconstruction in 1877, a comprehensive program of segregation and repression that kept blacks politically disenfranchised and socially and economically marginalized.

The maintenance of white supremacy depended above all on political solidarity that would defend the Jim Crow regime against threats either from protest movements within the former states of the Confederacy or from the federal government. The white vote must remain monolithic: to vote Republican was to commit racial treason. As had been the case ever since the rise of the Cotton Kingdom early in the nineteenth century, the issue of race was the absolute trump card of southern politics. The historian Ulrich B. Phillips famously summarized in a 1928 essay what he called "The Central Theme of Southern History": "That the South shall be and remain a white man's country."

White supremacy remained firmly in place well into the twentieth century. The origins of its undoing came with the great migrations north of blacks beginning in the 1920s. In the North, blacks could and did vote, and beginning in Franklin Roosevelt's second presidential race in 1936 they increasingly switched their voting allegiance from the party of Lincoln to the party of the New Deal. FDR's programs of relief and reform appealed to their economic interests, and as the black vote became an important element in the New Deal coalition, northern Democratic politicians began to respond to the demand that the federal government take action against segregation in the South.

White southerners, in the meantime, remained Democratic in their national voting, but with increasing unease. Southerners had always been

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states' rights Democrats, and they were uncomfortable with the New Deal's vast expansion of federal power. The discomfort began with fear that that power could be used to intervene in the South's racial arrangements, but it did not end there. The South had always inclined to conservatism—Jefferson and Jackson to the contrary notwithstanding—and the northern Democrats' continuing drift to the left on matters that went well beyond race made the members of the southern white establishment feel like orphans within their own party. By the late 1930s and continuing into the 1950s liberal critics complained regularly of an "unholy alliance" between congressional Republicans and southern Democrats. Unholy or not, the alliance was a natural one, forged in common opposition to the New Deal and its liberal successors.

Two great events finally moved white southerners from voting *with* Republicans on an occasional basis in Congress to voting *for* them regularly when they went to the polls. The first was the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision mandating the end of segregation in public schools. The second was the passage ten years later of the Civil Rights Act outlawing racial discrimination in public accommodations. Together these measures marked the beginning of the end of white supremacy—and thereby undermined the racial solidarity that had developed out of the need to preserve that supremacy. The South was no longer "a white man's country," and white southerners finally felt themselves free to vote with something other than race in mind. In that freedom, the conservatives among them found it increasingly natural to join a Republican party that in fact represented their true political inclinations.

All this had little or nothing to do with Republican strategy. The GOP, it should be remembered, voted overwhelmingly in 1964 to break the southern filibuster in the Senate and thus assure passage of the Civil Rights Act. And it is difficult to make out just what Nixon's putative strategizing in 1968 consisted of. As President, he had his Justice Department act vigorously to complete the integration of school systems across the nation. When Daniel Patrick Moynihan was challenged by his liberal Democratic friends to justify his service as Nixon's domestic counselor, he pointed to, among other things, the Administration's record on desegregation. In any case, Republicans from Nixon on did not need a strategy to draw white southerners into their ranks; it happened naturally. Indeed, had it not been for the racial deformities of southern history, it would have happened much earlier.

Conversely, the Republicans can do little in the short run to attract a higher percentage of the black vote than the 10 to 12 percent they presently draw. The civil rights establishment has persuaded a large majority of blacks that an activist federal government committed to quota systems and expansive spending programs is necessary to their progress. Republicans cannot endorse such positions and remain Republicans. Colin Powell earnestly urges the GOP to "reach out" to black voters, but it can do so credibly only by trying to change the minds of the black electorate, not by capitulating to its current demands. It is not racism but ideology that explains Republican weakness among blacks.

Why, then, all those black faces at the Republican convention? Quite simply, to indicate to moderate voters that the party is open to all those who will embrace its principles, and that race is, in itself, an irrelevant category. Ideological preferences aside, that's not a bad strategy for any party to follow. FT

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# Opinion

## Grim Tales

*Kari Jenson Gold*

For the past two years, I have been the head "Library Mommy" at my daughter's private nursery school. The children tell me what books they have or have not read, what books they have at home, and what interests them in the school's library. The nursery school is full of bright, lively, privileged children. They take lessons in ballet, gymnastics, swimming, and lead busy, carefully scheduled lives. Their parents attended good colleges and are, by the world's standards, successful. And yet, if you were to visit the children's bedrooms to explore their libraries, you might be surprised at what you find there: limited and unimaginative collections often dominated by Walt Disney, Berenstain Bears, and Sesame Street. For most of these children, for instance, their only acquaintance with the classic children's fairy tales comes from Disney. But what my daughter calls "the Disney version" bears very little resemblance to the original.

Compare two versions of the beginning of *The Little Mermaid* by Hans Christian Andersen, one faithful to the original and translated by Neil Philip, the other taken from Disney's famous movie and book.

> 1) Far out to sea the water is as blue as the petals of the loveliest cornflower and as clear as the purest glass; but is deep, deeper than any anchor can reach. Countless church steeples would have to be piled one on top of the other to stretch from the sea bed to the surface. That's where the sea folk live.
>
> 2) Ariel was sixteen, the age when a mermaid was supposed to be thinking about marrying a merboy and settling down. But Ariel had other things on her mind.

Guess which is which. Disney books never mention the original author (in this case Andersen), nor do they say anywhere who is responsible for the text. These books credit only Walt Disney Pictures and make no pretense to be anything other than marketing tools for their movies. But a child who is fed a steady diet of such deadly, banal sentences can hardly be expected to create anything other than deadly, banal sentences.

There are more substantive problems, too. For instance, Disney books always name all the characters; thus, the little mermaid becomes Ariel. Why didn't Andersen name his little mermaid? Why are some fairy tale characters named and others not? Surely it is not by accident. Names bestow familiarity and specificity. Ariel is just another girl, like you or me, accessible, one of the gang. The little mermaid, however, remains mysterious, but also in some real way closer to the reader—she could indeed *be* me. Because she has no name, she could have any name. Because she is not named Ariel, she could, in my imagination, be Kari. Nameless, she is both essentially mysterious as a mermaid and truly universal.

Already in these opening sentences one can see the thought police at work. Ariel is not interested in merboys (whatever they are) or in settling down. She has bigger fish to fry: fulfillment, empowerment, self-realization . . . Disney to the rescue! By contrast, here is Andersen's description of the little mermaid: "She was a strange child, quiet and thoughtful . . . she would have cried, but a mermaid has no tears, and so she suffers all the more."

This complex character finds herself, in Andersen's version, in an equally complex situation. The little mermaid longs to see what lies above the ocean. When she finally gets her chance, she rescues a Prince whose ship has capsized. She falls in love, but, because she is a mermaid, must return to the ocean. In the original, the little mermaid questions her grandmother about the upper world.

> "If human beings are not drowned, do they live forever?" she asked. "Or do they die, as we do in the sea?"
>
> "Yes," said the old lady, "they must die. And their lives are far shorter than ours. We can live for three hundred years, but at the end we just turn to foam on the water. . . . We do not have immortal souls; there is no new life for us. We're like the green reeds—once they are cut, they will never be green again. But human beings have a soul which lives forever, even after their body has turned to dust. . . . Only if a human loved you more than his father and mother, and thought only of you, and let a priest take his right hand and put it in yours, while he promised to be true to you for all eternity, then his soul would flow into you, and you would share in human happiness. He would give you a soul, yet still keep his own."

To win the Prince's love and gain an immortal soul, the little mermaid resolves to visit the Sea Witch.

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There she exchanges her beautiful voice for two human legs, even as the Sea Witch warns her that if she fails in her quest, and the Prince marries another, her "heart will break and [she] will be nothing but foam on the water."

Needless to say, there is no mention of immortal souls, sea foam, eternity, priests, or even marriage in the Disney book. Instead, Ariel, empowered female, sits crying in her ocean room, when the Sea Witch (now called Ursula) shows up to tempt her. "Sign this contract. It says that I agree to make you a human for three days. . . . If, after three days, Prince Eric does not love you, has not kissed you . . . you belong to me!" Notice how the stakes have been diminished: our girl just needs a kiss. Not only does this new, improved, politically correct version take away most of the motivation for her sacrifice, it also removes the conscious choice and effort required to visit the Sea Witch. Disney turns Ariel into just another desperate girl trying to find affection.

In the original ending, the Prince marries another girl whom he mistakenly believes had saved him during the storm. (The little mermaid has no voice to tell him it was she who had brought him to safety.) Her mermaid sisters appear to give her one last chance.

> We have given our hair to the sea witch, so that she would help us to save your life. She has given us this knife. See how sharp it is! Before the sun rises you must plunge it into the prince's heart. When his warm blood splashes over your feet they will join together into a fishtail, and you will be a mermaid once more.

But the little mermaid sees the Prince sleeping with his bride, kisses him on the brow, and flings the knife into the sea. She throws herself into the ocean expecting to die, when she is met by hundreds of transparent creatures, the daughters of the air.

> "You, poor little mermaid, have striven with all your heart. You have suffered, and endured, and have raised yourself into the world of the spirits of the air. Now, by three hundred years of good deeds, you can make yourself an immortal soul." And the little mermaid raised her translucent arms to the sun, and for the first time she shed a tear.

The Disney ending is, in contrast, simply ludicrous: Ariel gets her voice back from some birds at the crucial moment; Ursula reappears to steal Ariel from Eric; Eric kills Ursula, and they all live happily ever after. No search, no choice, no sacrifice, no sorrow, no redemption, no truth. *And* lousy prose. This is the stuff on which we are raising our children.

Lest this become a diatribe against Disney, I hasten to mention that the same kind of tampering with time-tested tales occurs in all sorts of venues. There is, in Central Park, an exquisite little marionette theater devoted to performing children's literature. We have attended two birthday parties there, one featuring *Gulliver's Travels*, another *Jack and the Beanstalk*. Both times, I was thrilled with the charming puppets and lovely sets. But after a few minutes, my delight (and the children's attention) started to fade. The directors had introduced silly, extraneous characters, included inappropriate modern references, and, most egregiously, altered the narrative to the point of nonsense. To the extent that the plays followed the beautiful, powerful lines of the original tales, the children sat quietly entranced. At the precise moments that the tales diverged, they became restive and distracted. They knew, far more clearly than their parents and the puppeteers, what worked and what did not.

But it is in the schools that perhaps the deepest confusion exists about the purposes of children's literature. This year my husband and I attended several open houses at top-ranked private schools. At some of these events, tables for each grade were set up with frequently used materials, books read, and work produced. Very few of the classic children's books were in evidence. Instead, the children were reading books chosen not because they were beautifully written or had stood the test of time, but because of their relationship to "appropriate" subject matter. In the lower grades at least, books were seldom understood as literature; they were merely aids to teaching social studies.

The nursery school my daughter attends does its best to promote good literature, but even there the thought police have triumphed. When my daughter brought in Oscar Wilde's *The Happy Prince*, perhaps the most exquisite of all fairy tales, I was cautioned against letting her bring in a book that mentioned God. ("'You have rightly chosen,' said God, 'for in my garden of Paradise this little bird shall sing for evermore, and in my city of gold the Happy Prince shall praise me.'")

But it's *Oscar Wilde*, I said, thinking surely his credentials as famous playwright and famous homosexual would mitigate against the regrettable God matter. Apparently, however, many parents had complained whenever the subject of God had come up at school. The Happy Prince need not apply.

Parents regularly express concern about violence and death in books, about anything that could be considered scary, and they do an enormous amount of

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censoring at home. TV time is limited, junk food is banned. These are careful, concerned parents. But few seem equally concerned about the dangers of trivial stories and bad prose.

Children need to hear beautiful language if they are to speak and write beautifully. They need to hear stories of love and courage and joy and sorrow so their imaginations are fired and their hearts expanded. They need to hear the language of Rudyard Kipling, the whimsy of A. A. Milne, the sorrow of Oscar Wilde, the mystery of Hans Christian Andersen, the wisdom of E. B. White, the terror of the Brothers Grimm, the wildness of Dr. Suess . . . there is no shortage of magnificent children's literature. Children have little enough time for reading in their busy, scheduled lives. When they read, or when they listen, what we give them should be worthy of their eager, wondering minds and souls.

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# A Premature Postmodern

*Max L. Stackhouse*

Few would dispute, although some regret, the fact that the single most influential voice in twentieth-century Protestant thought as it bears on religion in the public square is Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923). Only Reinhold Niebuhr and Dietrich Bonhoeffer can compare in generating key concepts and intellectual loyalties that have reproduced themselves for generations. Yet the reception of and resistance to Troeltsch's thought has left deep marks in the religious and social history of the century now past.

To be sure, Troeltsch was largely ignored by statist-oriented "political theology" as it derived on the right from Carl Schmitt and on the left from Ernst Bloch, although Troeltsch energetically jumped into the struggle to establish a republic in Weimar after World War I. Further, it was his friends and heirs (including, in many ways, Niebuhr) who stood against the rising tide of radical ideologies after his death, and who later most energetically mobilized the Protestant churches outside of Germany against the Nazis and later the Communists. Indeed, as Ronald Stone of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary has shown in a new book that contains the translations of broadcasts to the German people during World War II by Troeltsch's student Paul Tillich, the Protestant resistance movements against the Nazis were likely inspired as much by Troeltschian motifs as by the more widely celebrated Barmen Declaration, written by Karl Barth, and the writings of the martyr Bonhoeffer.

Troeltsch was also ignored, or treated as a "neoliberal," by the advocates of Liberation Theology as it played out in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s, the belated fruit of the Catholic revisionist Maurice Blondel and the Marxist revisionist Antonio Gramsci. Indeed, when the World Council of Churches began to modulate its earlier Barthian accents to become a center of liberation advocacy, Troeltsch's influence further declined in those Protestant circles.

Yet it was the students of Troeltsch, then already a full generation removed from him, who often worked ecumenically at local levels in the West, who advocated the embrace of the UN Declaration of Human Rights by the Protestant churches, and who marched with Martin Luther King for civil rights in America. In doing so, they often parted ways with other Protestants who were nationalistic or racist—as well as with those who were so alienated from Western culture in general and American culture in particular that they uncritically echoed every liberation voice that protested against them.

More recently, Troeltsch has come under fire from neo-sectarian pietists such as John Howard Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas, and treated with harsh contempt by those who have appointed themselves the guardians of "radical orthodoxy," such as John Milbank. But it is not at all clear that they understand Troeltsch. Besides, they tend to accuse anyone who seeks to address public issues theologically of selling out to "the principalities and powers." They note, for instance, that Troeltsch sometimes advocated the necessity of a "compromise" between the gospel and the world. But they fail to note that he clearly defined the "compromise" he intended as finding that synthetic possibility in a particular historical moment that was "co-promising" between basic theological insights and the social realities at hand.

The nonsectarian traditions of twentieth-century Protestantism, however—the parts that have not become cadres of liberation or advocates of pious communitarianism, and are thus likely to continue their public influence into the next century—have been shaped directly or indirectly by Troeltsch and his followers more than is acknowledged. He was cited often by the founders of the American Social Gospel and Christian Labor movements early in the century as they generated what later became the New Deal. He

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was utilized heavily by H. Richard Niebuhr at mid-century in studies of religion, the Church, and American life. He was made mandatory reading by several generations of leading Protestant teachers of Christian ethics—James Luther Adams, Walter Muelder, Paul Ramsey, Roger Shinn, Edward Long, James Gustafson, and Gibson Winter (and their many students) in the post-World War II period. He has been cited by intellectual historians and social theorists from Leo Strauss to David Martin and Peter Berger. And he has been taken up in divergent ways by such Catholic thinkers as David Tracy, Dennis McCann, Michael Novak, and, until his untimely death, Theodore Steeman. All, in one way or another, struggle with the issues of how to accept the historical nature of Christianity without succumbing to relativism, how to affirm the transcendent claims of Christianity without recourse to supernaturalist metaphysics, and how to more fully actualize the commitment of Christianity to universal justice without imposing the values of one culture.

As a professor of theology at the University of Heidelberg, Troeltsch lived with his family in the other half of a duplex where his "religiously unmusical" (as his wife said of him), morally rigorous, and sociologically brilliant colleague, Max Weber, wrote his five volumes on the sociology of religion. They were friends also with the famous Jewish historian of law Georg Jellinek, who wrote a definitive work on the theological foundations of modern human rights law, and the conservative Dutch Calvinist Abraham Kuyper, who developed the theory of "sphere" pluralism that has increasingly been in conversation with Roman Catholic theories of "subsidiarity." They all had sympathy for aspects of natural law theory and discussed appreciatively the reinvigoration of the social encyclical tradition by Leo XIII.

These figures obviously did not agree on all things, but they did all recognize that the deep structures of existence and the long traditions of religion shape the present and the future more than most of modern scholarship has acknowledged. They also knew that the repudiation of that reality, as fact and as value, had been taken in radical and destructive directions by Marx and Nietzsche, the godfathers of postmodernism. They were, at the same time, also critical of traditional dogmatics, not only because it made unbelievable claims, but because it could not, in their view, withstand the historicist assaults that they saw on the intellectual horizon as the influence of Marx's militant secularism and of Nietzsche's nihilist romanticism flourished.

Troeltsch saw the problems of their historicism early and acutely. It had something to it, he saw, in that it recognized that much of our thought and life is deeply embedded in historically constructed and changeable patterns. But that recognition was not the whole truth, and he was convinced that historicism's partial truth could give us no moral guidance for life. Indeed, he held that certain "religious a priori" were intrinsic to human nature and had to be acknowledged in social theory. The critical issue was whether theology could acknowledge the depths of historicity and social theory the depths of religious consciousness.

In the decade before the turn of the twentieth century Troeltsch produced a number of articles that called for his contemporaries to face these matters directly; and in the first ten years of the new century he struggled mightily with this problem, writing *The Absoluteness of Christianity and the History of Religions* and *Political Ethics and Christianity*, plus a number of essays contrasting historical and dogmatic approaches to faith. (See *Religion in History*, collected and translated by J. L. Adams and W. Bense.) Troeltsch's *Der Historismus und seine Probleme* ("Historicism and Its Problems"), never published in English, appeared later and identified most of the issues now known to us as postmodernism.

Troeltsch was convinced that the dogmatic theologians of his tradition were ignoring the situation, and that those who tried to face every problem by simply reclaiming "the spirit of love," as advocated by several post-dogmatic reformers, were not intellectually serious. Neither group appreciated that theology and ethics, when they are alive, are always in dynamic conversation with the cultural, philosophical, existential, and social contexts in which they are found, just as every civilization, even an apparently secular one, needs an intellectually plausible religious center or it will collapse for want of an inner moral architecture.

The question was whether, in the new situation, a new synthesis was possible on Christian grounds, one analogous to that of Augustine with regard to biblical religion and Neoplatonic philosophy, or Thomas with Augustine and Aristotle, or Calvin with Luther and the legacy of Stoic thought. These great synthesizers abandoned neither tradition and faith, as had the Enlightenment, nor the dynamic contributions of philosophical and cultural insight, as did the dogmatists.

Troeltsch was not interested, therefore, only in a condemnation of his opponents. It was the prospect of a new synthesis that drove him. Such a proposal came into fuller view when he offered an address in 1906 to the Ninth Congress of German Historians. In his highly influential lecture, Troeltsch put forward the view that Protestantism was, in profound if little-recognized ways, the womb of "modernity" and that

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"modernity" could not be understood either as a purely scientific "coming of age" of reason, or as a full-scale secularistic rejection of the Christian past.

Of course, many theologians feared modernity and many Enlightenment philosophers relished the "defeat" of religion as so much myth and magic. Troeltsch disagreed with both. Some things in the Enlightenment were novel, but that did not mean that they were by definition incompatible with the faith. Indeed, many features of modernity were nothing other than strikingly fresh developments of classic, catholic motifs in conversation with a new cultural context that a reformed Christianity might well be able to take in new directions. This view comported well with the ways in which some church fathers had related the faith to the Greco-Roman world. It also echoed previous efforts of some humanist Catholics (such as Erasmus), some Phillipist Lutherans (following Melanchthon in manifesting a renewed interest in Aristotle), and a number of free church reformers (such as the Puritans who sought to establish a Christian commonwealth in the American colonies using both Stoic republican and Reformed Christian motifs). Troeltsch also adopted insights from Schleiermacher, who sought to establish theology as a university discipline; from the post-Hegelian philosopher of history Dilthey; and from the American philosopher and student of religious experience William James. In time, Troeltsch expanded that lecture into a little book, translated as *Protestantism and Progress: The Significance of Protestantism for the Rise of the Modern World* (1912).

Troeltsch's title identified the issue. Many Christians found their faith in deep conflict with modernity. Could some kind of "catholic neo-reformed Christianity" creatively link the rationality, empiricism, personalism, and historicism of the modern world to the classical traditions of the faith? Could, as Troeltsch sometimes put it, a Christian social philosophy and a Christian personalist psychology be developed? If not, the brilliant terrors of Marx and Nietzsche would likely shatter societies and souls. But if so, a fresh version of Christianity could be the springboard of a future beyond modernity. It is this that allows one to speak of Troeltsch as the father of a certain kind of postmodernism.

Of course, not everyone agreed that what he was seeking could or should be sought. The Lutherans in his native Germany and the pietistic evangelicals in America had little sympathy with the effort. They could not imagine a non-confessional state shaped by a theological ethic, a tolerant pluralist culture rooted in a Christian conviction about freedom of conscience and association, or a civil society centered in a nonestablished church. (It was impossible for Troeltsch, as for almost any Protestant of his time, to imagine the pre-Vatican II Catholic Church as the source of renewal toward a new Christian synthesis.)

Troeltsch's greatest work, in size and significance, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches and Sects* (1911), has been a center piece of graduate courses in Christian Ethics in Protestant circles since it was published. It is an extended overview of his subject, organized, in the first instance, according to a series of "departments of life"—obviously a revised understanding of the "orders of creation" so deeply rooted in Lutheran thought. Thus, he takes up questions of politics and power, economics, work and class, science, learning and education, family and sexuality, and art and culture as these spheres had been addressed by the Church. But although some biblical and doctrinal themes are perennial, Troeltsch did not think that one constant perspective has prevailed historically, a fact that leads to the second feature of the work's organization.

Troeltsch holds that the New Testament has a series of fundamental elements that give concrete substance to the "religious a priori" of human consciousness. These are combined in various ways by the biblical authors as they were in later developments of doctrine and morals. Theologians through the years also drew from philosophical and ethical resources in the cultural environment of the Church. Thus Troeltsch traced the formations and reformations of Christian ethics as believers addressed the issues that the various "departments of life" posed for them in ever new ways.

Troeltsch recognized the pluralism of answers that had been developed over time, although he thought that certain great syntheses provided the most creative and enduring responses. He charted these perspectives, drawing comparisons and contrasts through five periods of development—the early Church, the medieval synthesis, Lutheran Protestantism, the Calvinist Reformation, and the various sectarian and spiritual impulses that developed first into the monastic movement and later in the directions of "withdrawing sects," "aggressive sects," and "spiritual movements." His famous "church/sect" typology, now used by scholars and journalists when speaking of religious movements and their impact on public life, derived from this work.

Less widely noted is the fact that Troeltsch saw the twentieth century as a time of vague, free-floating "spirituality," of little importance for the great issues. Modern churches lacked social significance because, contrary to what had been the case in all the preceding ages, they lacked a high view of the Church. Ecclesiology is, indeed, essential to Christian social philoso-

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phy, since the Church is the place where persons are formed theologically and ethically to live responsibly in the wider society.

In one sense, Troeltsch's monumental work can be understood as a self-critical search for a corrective to the German Lutheran tradition, with its tendency to divide law and gospel too radically and to hand the exterior church over to the state while confining the inner church to the heart. Troeltsch thought that only two great syntheses have been generated in the long history of the Christian heritage—the medieval synthesis of the Roman Catholic tradition, and the "modern" tradition that derived from Calvin as modified by the sectarian heritage and Enlightenment thought. Lutherans would, Troeltsch thought, sooner or later have to bend back toward Rome or ally with their Reformed cousins.

He considered the withdrawing and aggressive sects in considerable detail, seeing the root of one in the monastic impulses of the early and medieval Church, and the root of the other in the episodic attempts to bring the Kingdom of God by forced righteousness. The fruit of the first is the quietistic "peace churches," the fruit of the second is Christian Socialism. Troeltsch was attracted to the sectarian desires for a "pure faith" and a "righteous society," but he concluded that only the great church-types of the Catholic and Reformed traditions could sustain both the Church and the various spheres of the common life. He thought, however, that these too had become wooden, and he did not see clearly how they could be renewed, although that was his hope. Those who have followed Troeltsch are those who have not despaired of the effort.

We do not know whether the future will bring an extended or renewed interest in Troeltsch. We do know that in Germany new critical editions of his works are appearing under the leadership of Trotz Rentdorff, Friedrich W. Graf, and Klaus Tanner. Also, at Harvard Divinity School, Sarah Coakley has introduced new reflections on Troeltsch's Christology, while at Yale Thomas Ogletree is seeking to update Troeltsch's insights for our era, and graduate seminars are regularly held on Troeltsch at Princeton. Indeed, Troeltsch continues to be mined in many places for suggestions about how to handle the continuing dilemma of facing up to pluralism and historicity without falling into the pits of relativism or, in reaction to that temptation, retreating to premodern dogmatics. The problem, as ever, is for the Church fully to engage the world without in the process sacrificing its theological integrity.

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# Sacred Fanfares

*Michael Linton*

The international broadcast of the opening of Scotland's new parliament in July 1999 gave the world more to see than just Queen Elizabeth's much ballyhooed thistle-inspired frock. It also presented Scottish composer James MacMillan conducting two of his fanfares as Her Royal Highness led the procession into Parliament's temporary quarters. The botanical dress fared somewhat better than the music, which miscarried—a third of the way through the first fanfare MacMillan had to stop his musicians and make a fresh start. But no matter. The Scots all appeared to think it was a grand day, and it was a fine occasion for the world to see the most performed classical composer of his generation.

Barely forty years old, James MacMillan is something of a phenomenon in the world of composers. International performances of his works have been greeted by glowing notices and numerous awards. His percussion concerto for fellow Scot Evelyn Glennie has become a repertoire piece (receiving to date well over one hundred performances), and sixteen of his works are commercially available on six CDs. There are few composers twice his age who are as successful, and none who quite combine his twin enthusiasms for socialist politics and Catholic piety.

MacMillan studied music at Edinburgh University and did doctoral studies at Durham University. After lecturing briefly at Manchester University, he returned to Scotland where he now teaches at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama and acts as composer-in-residence for the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. He came to national attention in Britain in 1990 when his tone poem *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie* was included in a London Promenade Concert. The roughly thirty-minute work created a minor sensation and marked MacMillan as a composer to be watched; numerous commissions and performances followed, including an opera commissioned for the 1996 Edinburgh Festival.

What makes him especially interesting, however, is that among his most important works to date are two large-scale meditations on Christ's passion. *Visitatio Sepulchri* (The Visitation to the Tomb) is a theater piece, first performed in Glasgow in 1993. MacMillan takes his libretto from the famous tenth-century dialogue that was added to the Introit of the Easter Mass. ("Whom are you looking for in the tomb, you followers of Christ?" "Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified, O dwellers of Heaven." "He is not here, he has arisen as

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he himself foretold; go and make it known that he has arisen.") To this three-line mini-drama MacMillan adds settings of the eleventh-century sequence *Victimae Paschali Laudes* (Praise the Paschal Victim), and the *Te Deum*. Scored for a chamber orchestra, speaker, and six singers (three sopranos and three basses), the work lasts about forty minutes.

On an even grander scale is *Triduum*, a set of three pieces commissioned by the London Symphony and completed in 1996 and 1997. The first piece, "The World's Ransoming," is a twenty-minute concertante for English horn and orchestra intended as a reflection on Maundy Thursday. The second work of the trilogy is a three-movement cello concerto associated with Good Friday. The final work, "Vigil," is a symphonic meditation on the Easter vigil, again in three movements. *Triduum* requires virtuoso soloists (the cello concerto was requested by Msistislav Rostropovich) and a large orchestra with an expanded—and very busy—percussion battery. Together the three pieces last nearly two hours.

To anyone hopeful for the redemption of culture by works of high art (especially religious art), MacMillan is a frustrating composer. He is certainly an artist of intelligence, craftsmanship, and high purpose—which makes the failure of his work all the more regrettable. Far too often MacMillan's music reminds one of the note that the minister wrote in the margin of his sermon manuscript: "Argument weak here—yell like hell." MacMillan apparently believes that bombast is an adequate substitute for musical argument and theatrics for theological reflection; his works are filled with compositional miscalculations, clichés, and bad taste.

Here are a few examples. Hammer chords (*fortissimo* orchestral chords that fall like strokes of a hammer) are one of MacMillan's favorite devices. But each use (and there are many) reminds the listener of how much more effectively they were used by Udo Zimmermann in the overture to his opera *Die Soldaten*, Messiaen in the stigmata scene from his *St. Francis*, and of course Beethoven. Alban Berg used the orchestral unison to riveting effect in his opera *Wozzeck*; MacMillan's reliance on the device is at best referential and usually cloying. Igor Stravinsky (in the beginning of his ballet *Firebird*) and Henryk Górecki (in his Third Symphony) used passages for divided double basses to create sections of intense gravity. But when MacMillan uses them—and he does so a lot—they sound like movie music introducing Dracula's castle: spooky and cheap. Cadences are supposed to act as summary conclusions to extended musical arguments; MacMillan's too often seem to have little to do with the music that precedes them (the cadence that ends the final movement of the cello concerto is so mismanaged that it almost sounds comic). And while he is fully able to keep his musicians resolutely plowing along, one longs for an original melody to justify all their hard work.

But most disappointing is MacMillan's attitude toward his texts. Certainly since the Renaissance (and possibly before), the primary purpose of composers in dealing with texts was to exegete them musically, the music serving as a kind of midrash upon the words. In the greatest works of liturgical and devotional music this creates perhaps the most elevated composition of our civilization: the aesthetic/theological discourse. So, in the chorale that follows Christ's death in the *St. Matthew Passion*, Bach subjects the German word *allerbängsten* (roughly translated as "excruciating suffering") to musical torture, stretching its harmonic syntax to the point of tearing it apart. The meaning of the word is both intensified and clarified by Bach's compositional choices. Des Prez, Victoria, Schütz, Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner, Debussy, Britten, and Ives all do similar things.

But MacMillan typically seems unaware of his text's importance. The most significant, indeed shocking, text in *Visitatio* is the angel's proclamation to the women: *Non est hic. Surrexit.* ("He is not here. He is arisen.") Yet this phrase receives no special notice from MacMillan, who instead presents it as but one more yard of the musical fabric he is weaving. He is even so text-insensitive as to include the offensively anti-Semitic line from the *Victimae Paschali Laudes*, *Credendum est magis soli Mariae veraci quam Iudaeorum turbae fallaci.* ("Mary is to be believed more than the lying Jewish mob.") That repugnant line is excised when the sequence is used in contemporary liturgies. That a modern Christian should choose to revive it is inexplicable.

All of this results in music that is overly long, frequently bombastic, and more than occasionally descends to the level of kitsch. MacMillan ultimately trivializes the subjects he seeks to honor. He unfortunately is very much part of what is at least a sub-tradition in Catholic art. Listening to MacMillan reminds me of those gargantuan canvases of Judith or St. Sebastian or the Blessed Virgin so popular in Naples in the generations following Caravaggio: bloated, earnest, convoluted, garish, and—for all their acreage—eclipsed by a square inch of any canvas by Vermeer. Today, thankfully, they are largely forgotten.

Perhaps that comparison is unfair to MacMillan. Yes, he shares the flatulent rhetoric of those baroque Neapolitans, but his task today is much harder than theirs was. They at least were painting as Catholics for Catholics within a Catholic culture. MacMillan is com-

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posing for a culture that is non-Catholic, and Christian almost only by memory. How can he communicate in Christian terms with a society that is generally religiously illiterate and often hostile to Christianity?

Apparently, like the preacher who wrote that sermon note, Macmillan thinks he can do it by yelling. And to a generation raised on the hyper-decibellic banalities of rock, perhaps he is succeeding. His CDs are a modest commercial success and he has impressed enough critics to be awarded some major prizes. And one can make a case that when dealing with the Word of Life, it's better to yell than to say nothing. I just wish he'd yell in better taste.

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## Psalms

A part of us is always praying
for those things the other parts
don't know that they need.

At dusk,
Eight Great Blue Herons pick their legs out of muck,
Sixteen bony legs stroke the nerve of the sky,
Huge Heron weight lumbering, carving smoothly into air.

I watch them cross the channel toward me
toward me
toward me,
Land in a tree
above my head.

I knew a boy
born with no hands,
Learned to paint with his feet.
I have hands
that don't know where to go,
How to make or mend,
How to turn events,
Render any answers.
I stumble,
Colors wash away.

Sometimes it is one thing,
And then another,
And another,
The way things angle together
in a prism
where wind can bend light.

Carving into air underneath Heron wings,
Trying to decipher faith,
Feel reprieve into possible woulds,
Trying hard to paint that pardoning place
on the wind
of Heron wings,
Opening to the place where I need to know.

**Rebecca Lee Yates**

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# The Supreme Court 2000: A Symposium

## Robert H. Bork

At the end of this past term, the Supreme Court produced mixed results, but the results were mostly bad from a conservative point of view. And that is the way we must judge the Court these days, not in terms of constitutional reasoning, but in terms of ideology and politics, for that is all the liberal bloc has left us.

At least the Supreme Court this past term made one thing clear: constitutional law is useless to study and impossible to teach. Given its present performance, it ought also not be tolerated. It used to be that when a term of the Supreme Court came to an end, analysts gathered to pick over the bones of the decisions, looking for a shift in doctrine here, a hint of the future there. No longer. The near universal contempt for the Court's work by professors and lay analysts alike is little short of stunning.

Professor Jeremy Rabkin's article "A Supreme Mess at the Supreme Court" (*Weekly Standard*, July 17) is, if not entirely typical, close enough to the common reaction to be encouraging. The time for tut-tutting is past. Perhaps we are learning that what was within living memory an intellectual discipline is now politics, and a simplistic, highly partisan form of politics at that.

Though we speak of the left's "long march" through the institutions of bourgeois democracy, we do not usually recall that one of the most important of those institutions captured by the left, not quite completely but very nearly so, is the Supreme Court. For the last half century the Court has been a revolutionary force in American culture and politics. In this it is abetted by some state courts applying state constitutions, which are unreviewable by federal courts. One has only to recall the Hawaiian and Vermont courts that found in their constitutions the right to same-sex marriage. But the federal courts, and particularly the Supreme Court, have taken the lead in remaking America.

To cite only a few instances, there have in other terms been decisions redefining the family, altering the composition of state and federal legislatures, striking down restrictions on contraception in the course of creating a right of privacy, protecting pornography, adopting rules rendering it virtually impossible to prosecute obscenity, refusing states the authority to support all-male military academies, creating special rights for homosexuals, limiting school disciplinary procedures, banishing religion from public life, protecting foul language in public as well as speech advocating violence and overthrow of the government, and, of course, inventing a right to abort.

The long march continued during the recent term of the Supreme Court. Missouri's limit on statewide campaign contributions was upheld over First Amendment objections in order, among other things, to equalize political power (*Nixon v. Shrink Missouri Government*), while nude dancing, in this case prohibitable, was entitled to considerable protection as "expressive" behavior (*Erie v. Pap's P.M.*). Yet the Court struck down student elections permitting speech that might be used for prayer prior to high school football games (*Santa Fe School District v. Doe*). At some point, parody is the only appropriate response. Theodore Olson, a leading Supreme Court critic, was prompted to suggest that the students should dance nude before the games since naked dancing is preferred to prayer as a form of expression.

*Santa Fe School District* showed two prominent aspects of the Court's non-constitutional value system; though it invoked the Establishment Clause, the decision ran directly counter to that clause's historical meaning and, for good measure, demonstrated deep suspicion of "majoritarian" decisions. Chief Justice William



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Rehnquist's dissent justly observed that the majority opinion was "bristling with hostility" toward religion. The militant secularism, itself a religion established by the Court, was an instance of leveling since some students might be "offended" if prayer took place. That other students might be offended by government exclusion of prayer of any type counts for nothing in the Court's jurisprudence.

At the same time, the Court held in *Mitchell v. Helms* that the Establishment Clause allowed government to donate materials and equipment to both secular and religious schools. Apparently, religion is toxic in public but allowable if practiced in a private enclave, where, like pornography, it is safely out of sight of those offended by the unseemly spectacle.

The decision that the Boy Scouts have a constitutional right called "expressive association" to bar an open homosexual from serving as an assistant scoutmaster (*Boy Scouts of America v. Dale*) surely was heavily influenced by fear of pederasty, not in Dale's case but as inevitably flowing from a general rule applicable to all homosexuals. Today, of course, this is a fear that dare not speak its name. What is remarkable is that, even in this context, four Justices would have upheld a law that courted precisely that danger. In other contexts, and even in this one, with the departure of one member of the majority, homosexuality will become a favored category of persons. In part, it already has in the Court's jurisprudence.

But it remained for the abortion issue to reveal the full extent of the cultural left's determination to flatten the moral landscape. A Court majority overrode its own First Amendment doctrines to uphold a state ban on abortion protesters who seek to approach abortion clinics or women seeking abortions (*Hill v. Colorado*). But that decision paled into insignificance compared to the invalidation of a Nebraska statute prohibiting partial-birth abortions, a practice so close to infanticide as to be logically indistinguishable (*Stenberg v. Carhart*). The five-member majority thought the statute might "unduly burden" the general right to an abortion and was further defective because it included an exception only in cases where the mother's life was threatened, not where her health might be adversely affected. Perhaps the former supposed defect could be remedied by a redrawn statute, but a general exception for health means that any abortionist's finding of physical, mental, or emotional harm would make any statute limiting partial-birth killings unenforceable. Radical feminism and autonomy apparently conquer all other values, as they have in so many Court decisions.

The Court's jurisprudence is so disconnected from the Constitution that it sometimes seems to defy explanation. Commentators have variously posited a liking of power for its own sake, or a distrust of the hoi polloi and representative democracy so deep that, as Professor Robert F. Nagel says, "The demands of ideology, jurisprudence, and even the Constitution begin to pale if you think your job is to protect civilization itself." The remaining question is why a taste for power, distrust of the common man, and the defense of civilization always drive the Court in one direction. Why does the Court force into the Constitution notions of radical personal autonomy and egalitarian redistributions of power?

The fact is that one wing of the Court has aligned itself in the culture war with the intelligentsia against the rest of us. The reason so many Justices have over the past half century responded to the intellectual class is fairly well known, as is the reason for the orientation of that class on political and cultural matters. Another way of putting it is that, despite its death as an economic nostrum, the socialist impulse is the ruling passion of our age and is far broader than economics. It is possible to see the economic theory of socialism as one manifestation of a general preference for the universal over the particular, which, no doubt, is why it has been so frequently noted that socialists typically display a strong abstract sympathy for mankind and so little sympathy for individual people. Conservatism, by contrast, is more likely to respect the particularities of human circumstance and conduct.

One bloc on the Supreme Court is given to universal principles, or, to put the same point differently, a socialism of politics and culture, which necessarily implies redistribution of power in both areas. Hence, the preference for campaign finance limits despite the deleterious effect of such limits on the circulation of ideas and on First Amendment freedom of speech, and yet, simultaneously, a broadening of the meaning of speech to include "expressive" conduct, such as pornography and nude dancing. This flattens both political and moral hierarchies. Of course, not just any set of universal principles will do. The liberal bloc on the Court is almost fanatically secular, with a worldview that is antithetical to religion's universals. This bloc silently rejects the irrefutable evidence of what the Establishment Clause was actually meant to prohibit and has rewritten the clause to sweep away almost all public manifestations of religion.

I doubt that all of the liberal bloc fully intend the cataclysmic revolutions they have put in train. They are not the fire-breathing zealots the evidence of their decisions might suggest. And yet, a solid bloc of them are revolutionaries—genteel and urbane, but revolutionaries nonetheless. Justice John Paul Stevens, for

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example, is in person a moderate and thoroughly likeable man. One can only conclude that he does not realize the full devastation and havoc the Court is wreaking in our common life. Nor do I imagine that those who join him in "bristling hostility" to religion think of themselves as secular zealots. The true explanation seems to be that they are so thoroughly dyed in intellectual-class attitudes, and so isolated from mainstream culture in their secluded working lives and social environments, that their results, and not merely in religion cases, seem to them entirely natural and commonsensical.

It is unlikely that the intellectual class will abandon its universalistic aspirations anytime soon. This means that Justices must be selected who are impervious to that class's prejudices. Which in turn means that the direction of the Court will probably depend on the outcome of the presidential election in November. "Probably," not "certainly," only because of the vagaries of presidential choices. If Al Gore becomes President, we will certainly see nominees whose confirmation will put the Court on an extreme activist course for years to come and, if the past is any guide, the results will not be undone if and when more restrained Justices replace them. The "constitutional" right to an abortion will be entrenched and expanded. The prospect for banning even partial-birth abortions, or, more accurately, infanticides, will dwindle to zero. We may also expect a right to assisted suicide and same-sex marriage. The death penalty, despite being contemplated several times in the Constitution, may be abolished. Police will be further hampered in law enforcement efforts.

If George W. Bush wins, however, we cannot confidently expect appointees who are the opposite of Gore activists. A series of Republican appointments in the past has not materially altered the Court's trajectory. We simply do not know how Bush would go about selecting his candidates and how much, if at all, he would consider the judicial philosophy of persons to be put on the high court.

What is at stake is legitimate government. Rule by judges beyond their jurisdiction is a usurpation of democratic prerogatives. We have, however, been living with serial usurpations for over half a century and no doubt most people have gotten used to it. That is why the Court succeeds in remaking the cultural and moral architecture of the United States. It is also why so few voters cast their ballots with the Supreme Court and constitutional governance in mind. Whatever respect we once had for the morality of process rather than the attractiveness of results has long since eroded. That is deeply unfortunate, not just because of the frustration of our common understandings of right and wrong, but because democracy depends on the rule of law, which, in turn, depends upon adherence to the morality of process.

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## David M. Smolin

In considering the blind spots of other generations or cultures from a safe distance, it becomes clear that there is no atrocity, no horror, no injustice which human beings, under some circumstances, will not defend, or even posit as a positive good. Present an injustice or atrocity in a way that appeals to a combination of perceived self-interest, ideological fit, and group superiority, and all classes of human beings, regardless of intelligence, educational level, or social position, will likely embrace it.

The atrocities we can critique from afar frequently fail to illumine our minds sufficiently to steer us away from those closer at hand, for self-interest, ideology, and pride are far more powerful blinders than we realize. Certainly it is difficult for a society as divided as contemporary America to come to a shared understanding on fundamental ethical issues.

Justice Antonin Scalia declares in *Stenberg v. Carhart* that he is "optimistic enough to believe" that the decision constitutionally protecting partial-birth abortion will "one day . . . be assigned its rightful place in the history of this Court's jurisprudence beside *Korematsu* [validating internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II] and *Dred Scott* [holding white supremacy and racial slavery as fundamental tenets of American constitutionalism]." Justice Scalia is hoping that one day we will be as removed from the abortion controversy as we are today removed from past controversies over slavery and the internment of Japanese-Americans, and that this distance will be the consequence of having clearly and definitively rejected the injustice in question.

The alternatives to Justice Scalia's "optimism" are either 1) to accept the viewpoint that partial-birth abortion is legally and ethically acceptable, or 2) to fear that America will never reach the place where it clearly rejects such horrific forms of killing. There have been, after all, empires, nations, regimes, and peoples that went through their entire history without ever turning from their particular injustices and

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atrocities. There is no guarantee of justice being realized in history—including American history—and we cannot be confident that Justice Scalia's optimism will be vindicated.

*Stenberg* is historic because it constitutionally validates and protects an extreme and horrific form of abortion bordering on infanticide, while placing this validation in the context of explicitly gruesome descriptions of the various forms of late-term abortion. The legal issues and factual background of *Stenberg* forced each Justice to confront the raw facts of precisely how abortion brings about the destruction of the human fetus.

*Stenberg* centered on various methods of post-fifteen-week abortion. The most common method of abortion at this stage, dilation and evacuation (D&E), generally involves the use of surgical instruments to dismember the fetus. Because of a technical point regarding interpretation of the Nebraska statute, the majority in *Stenberg* felt obligated to emphasize, in clinical language, that D&E involves pulling "a portion of the fetus through the cervix into the birth canal," where the "traction" of the surgical instrument and the cervical opening produces dismemberment. Just in case anyone could miss the meaning of the majority's clinical description, Justice Anthony Kennedy's dissent translated this into lay language:

> The fetus, in many cases, dies just as a human adult or child would: it bleeds to death as it is torn from limb to limb. . . . The fetus can be alive at the beginning of the dismemberment process and can survive for a time while its limbs are being torn off. . . . Dr. [Leroy] Carhart [the abortionist who challenged Nebraska's partial-birth ban] has observed fetal heartbeat . . . with "extensive parts of the fetus removed," . . . and testified that mere dismemberment of a limb does not always cause death because he knows of a physician who removed the arm of a fetus only to have the fetus go on to be born "as a living child with one arm." . . . At the conclusion of a D&E abortion . . . the abortionist is left with "a tray full of pieces."

Under *Roe v. Wade* (1973) and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992), the states are powerless to prohibit D&E, since it is the most common method of abortion after fifteen weeks, and those cases mandate elective abortion until viability, and "health-indicated" abortion until birth. However, when abortion doctors in the early 1990s developed a new method of abortion—denominated variously as dilation and extraction (D&X), intact D&X, or intact D&E—the states and Congress reacted with extensive legislation activity prohibiting "partial-birth abortion." The essence of this new method was to use obstetrical-type methods to deliver the fetus into the birth canal, with the exception of the head. The physician would then employ what is clinically known as a "head reduction procedure" on the often still-living fetus, and then deliver a relatively intact, but dead, fetus. Once again, Justice Kennedy's dissent translates the procedure into ordinary language:

> The fetus' arms and legs are delivered outside the uterus while the fetus is alive; witnesses to the procedure report seeing the body of the fetus moving outside the woman's body. . . . At this point, the abortion procedure has the appearance of a live birth. As stated by one group of physicians, "as the physician manually performs breech extraction of the body of a live fetus, excepting the head, she continues in the apparent role of an obstetrician delivering a child." . . . With only the head of the fetus remaining in utero, the abortionist tears open the skull. According to Dr. Martin Haskell, a leading proponent of the procedure, the appropriate instrument to be used at this stage of the abortion is a pair of scissors. . . . Witnesses report observing the portion of the fetus outside the woman react to the skull penetration. . . . The abortionist then inserts a suction tube and vacuums out the developing brain and other matter found within the skull.

Justice Clarence Thomas' dissent contains the testimony of a nurse who had observed such an abortion:

> The baby's little fingers were clasping and unclasping, and his little feet were kicking. Then the doctor stuck the scissors in the back of his head, and the baby's arms jerked out, like a startle reaction, like a flinch, like a baby does when he thinks he is going to fall. The doctor opened up the scissors, stuck a high-powered suction tube into the opening, and sucked the baby's brains out. Now the baby went completely limp.

The reactions of the Court majority to the abortion methods in question exemplified the fact that human beings can justify anything. Justice Stephen Breyer, writing for the majority, admitted that his descriptions of abortion procedures "may seem clinically cold or callous to some, perhaps horrifying to others." Justice John Paul Stevens (joined by Justice

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Ruth Bader Ginsburg) stated: "Although much ink is spilled today describing the gruesome nature of late-term abortion procedures, that rhetoric does not provide me a *reason* to believe that the procedure Nebraska here claims it seeks to ban is more brutal, more gruesome, or less respectful of 'potential life' than the equally gruesome procedure [D&E] Nebraska claims it still allows." Justice Stevens labeled it "irrational" to ban partial-birth abortion but not D&E, despite the fact that it is the Court's own precedents that made it impossible to ban D&E. Justice Ginsburg (joined by Justice Stevens) noted that "amidst all the emotional uproar caused by an abortion case," it should be remembered that the prohibition of partial-birth abortion would "not save any fetus from destruction," and anyway that D&E abortion "is no less distressing or susceptible to gruesome description." Justices Stevens and Ginsburg thus used the fact that D&E abortion is horrific, yet clearly protected by *Roe* and *Casey*, not as a reason to question *Roe* and *Casey*, but instead to belittle as "irrational" or anti-*Roe* any attempt to prohibit the killing of a child partially delivered outside of the mother's body. Having forced the nation to swallow elective dismemberment of late-term unborn children, these Justices declared it "irrational" and unconstitutional to resist partial-birth abortion.

The hardening of the abortion right, like the hardening of the hearts of the Justices, was visibly on display in *Stenberg*. The most significant legal issue was whether Nebraska's prohibition of partial-birth abortion was unconstitutional because it failed to provide a health exception. Nebraska argued that a health exception was unnecessary because partial-birth abortion was never necessary for the health of the mother. Nebraska's position was buttressed by various statements of the American Medical Association, which had previously supported a federal version of the ban on partial-birth abortion, and which after expert study had been unable to identify any circumstance where partial-birth abortion was the only appropriate procedure. Similarly, a prior statement of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists had concluded that it "could identify no circumstances under which [D&X] would be the only option to save the life or preserve the health of the woman."

Further, even the abortion doctors who had testified in favor of D&X abortion in fact had never used the technique, leading Justice Kennedy to label their testimony a "courtroom conversion." The most the majority could say, after reviewing opposing medical briefs, was that although there were no controlled medical studies, and although medically safe alternatives were always available, the disagreement by respectable medical opinion as to whether D&X was ever or generally *safer* to some degree made it constitutionally mandatory that the individual abortion doctor be allowed to select D&X abortion. Thus, although Justice Sandra Day O'Connor noted that an appropriately worded statute with a health exception might be constitutional, Justice Kennedy explained that such a statute would not prohibit a single partial-birth abortion, for given the Court's approach every individual physician would have to be permitted to determine whether there were "health" reasons for a partial-birth abortion.

The Court further interpreted Nebraska's statute as potentially applicable to D&E abortion, and unconstitutional for that reason. This holding was far less significant in itself, since such a defect could be effectively cured by subsequent legislative amendment. More significant was the Court's return to its pre-*Casey* jurisprudence under which it typically interpreted abortion-related statutes to assure their unconstitutionality. Thus, the Court in *Stenberg* deliberately chose to interpret Nebraska's statute as applicable to D&E abortion despite a contrary interpretation by the State Attorney General and a plausible contrary statutory construction presented in the dissent of Justice Thomas. The Court, as it had prior to *Casey*, refused to apply the usual principle that laws should be interpreted to avoid constitutional difficulties, thereby illustrating a unique hostility to laws regulating abortion.

*Stenberg* represented a significant hardening of the abortion rights position of Justice O'Connor. The *Stenberg* dissenters repeatedly cited and quoted Justice O'Connor's abortion opinions from the 1980s, in which she had criticized the Court for operating as "the nation's ex officio medical board with powers to approve or disapprove medical and operative practices and standards throughout the United States." She had then emphasized the superior position of legislatures over courts to make such factual medical judgments, argued for the right of states to regulate abortion despite the views of medical organizations on "the *physical* safety of a particular procedure," and complained of "an unprecedented canon of construction under which in cases involving abortion a permissible [constitutional] reading of a statute is to be avoided at all costs." But Justice O'Connor's prior abortion opinions did not prevent her from adhering in *Stenberg* to all that she had previously criticized, and now in a context far more explicit as to the underlying horror of late-term abortion.

In 1992, Justices Kennedy, O'Connor, and David Souter had banded together to issue a joint opinion reaffirming the essentials of *Roe* on the grounds of

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adhering to precedent, while claiming to create a more moderate standard of judicial review for abortion regulations that would allow room for significant legislative activity on behalf of the unborn. Any one of the three could have provided the fifth vote at that time to overrule *Roe*, but they chose instead to band together and reaffirm it. Justice Kennedy strove mightily to show that *Stenberg* was a betrayal, rather than a logical consequence, of their infamous *Casey* joint opinion, and he has good cause to believe that Nebraska's prohibition of partial-birth abortion should have been constitutional under *Casey*'s approach to interpreting and reviewing abortion regulations.

Justice Kennedy argued that partial-birth abortion could rationally be viewed as worse than D&E abortion because it was closer to infanticide and subverted obstetrical childbirth techniques to kill the fetus delivered partially outside of the mother, thereby particularly endangering the reputation and ethical integrity of the medical profession. Yet, despite his prior vote to protect D&E abortion, Justice Kennedy conceded that "those who oppose abortion" would subject both partial-birth abortion and D&E abortion "to the most severe moral condemnation, condemnation reserved for the most repulsive human conduct." It is difficult to know whether Justice Kennedy is having pangs of conscience for his role in preserving elective abortion. It is clear enough, however, that now that Justice Kennedy is no longer needed as the fifth vote to uphold *Roe*, Justices O'Connor and Souter no longer feel bound to accord even minimalistic abortion regulations the more moderate level of review promised in their *Casey* opinion.

Pity the *Stenberg* five, for like Pharoah of old their hardened hearts place them in more danger, spiritually speaking, than those whom they oppress. Pity Justice Kennedy, who cast the decisive vote eight years ago to permit "the most repulsive human conduct," and now gazes upon the gruesome consequences. Pity America, where a woman is not considered equal to a man unless her physician may freely elect between dismembering her baby, piece by piece, onto a tray or partially delivering her baby and then suctioning out the brains. And pity humanity, ever finding fresh ways to express its depths of depravity, and desperately in need of redemption by the God whose image we repeatedly deface in our inhumanity to one another.

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# Douglas W. Kmiec

The Supreme Court's recently completed term was extraordinary in breadth. Fundamental issues of constitutional structure and individual right have been reexamined. Without taking anything away from the Court's uphill and important effort to bring federal and state authority into better balance, one can argue that its most profound doctrinal shift occurred in the area of aid to religious schools.

Writing for a plurality in *Mitchell v. Helms*, Justice Clarence Thomas overturned two earlier rulings from the 1970s—*Meek v. Pittenger* (1975) and *Wolman v. Walter* (1977)—that were often argued to categorically deny aid to religious schools and other so-called "pervasively sectarian" institutions. Returning to the Constitution's original understanding, and applying a good deal of common sense, Justice Thomas reasoned that government benefits, like computers and textbooks, may be allocated to religious and public school alike without running afoul of the First Amendment Establishment Clause. In short, the religious nature of the recipient is irrelevant to constitutional analysis and should no longer be used to render religious citizens second class in the distribution of the general education fund to which they, like other citizens, contribute. The *Mitchell* decision is good news for advocates of school vouchers.

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor (who is especially sensitive to public religious endorsement) and Justice Stephen Breyer (who was disclosing a more religiously accommodating side of his judicial persona for the first time) concurred in the *Mitchell* judgment, but wrote separately to indicate that where aid is provided directly to religious schools, reasonable steps must be taken to avoid having it diverted to religious purposes. This may not impede the voucher effort much, however, since even these Justices seem to waive much of this concern if the aid is provided first to parent or student, whereby any resultant religious use or message is clearly attributable to individuals.

To appreciate the significance of *Mitchell*, it is important to take a step back and review how we got here. Both *Meek* and *Wolman* invalidated state programs providing various instructional equipment, such as maps, as well as other assistance, e.g., bus transportation for field trips to secular sites from religious schools. These decisions were always a bit odd. After all, the Court had previously allowed, however grudgingly, some provision of government assistance to religious schools: in *Board of Education v. Allen* (1968), the furnishing of secular textbooks, and even earlier in *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947), the evenhanded reimbursement for the cost of bus transportation to and from public and religious schools. Shortly after, however, the Court

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decided *Lemon v. Kurtzman* (1971), which created a three-part test that would find an establishment clause violation for any assistance given with the primary purpose to advance religion or that had such effect or that involved excessive government entanglement with religion.

The *Lemon* test has been difficult to apply and severely criticized by almost every member of the Court. A majority of Justices have advocated alternatives, focusing on whether government action symbolically endorses religion or coerces religious participation. The advocacy took on an especially accommodating form in *Agostini v. Felton* (1997), which sustained the delivery of remedial instruction in math and English by public school teachers in private religious schools.

Nevertheless, until *Mitchell* bade them farewell, *Meek* and *Wolman* were on the books. We are well rid of these problem children, which, even when written, were incoherent and fractured. A three-Justice plurality in *Meek* somehow drew a line between the acceptable provision of textbooks in *Allen* and the unacceptable supply of maps in *Meek*. This led to a famous quip by Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who wondered aloud that since the Court approved of books, but not maps, what would it do with an atlas—"a book of maps." *Wolman* drew even more indecipherable lines, invalidating some (but not all) speech, hearing, and other diagnostic services by public employees in religious schools and precluding buses for field trips from religious schools—even though public buses could take them to school beforehand.

Beginning in 1980, the Court began to recover its initial—that is, pre-*Lemon, Meek,* and *Wolman*—constitutional direction. And by the time the Court decided that an individual could apply state vocational assistance to study for the ministry in *Witters v. Washington Department of Services for the Blind* (1986), five Justices would join Justice Lewis Powell's concurring statement that "state programs that are wholly neutral in offering educational assistance to a class defined without reference to religion do not violate the second part of the *Lemon v. Kurtzman* test."

Opponents of educational freedom nevertheless continued to prop up *Meek* and *Wolman* with byzantine differentiation. All of the Court's cases, they claimed, have held that aid must benefit the student, not the religious school enterprise. The distinction between the books approved in *Allen* and the maps disapproved in *Meek* was argued to be explainable by the fact that the former were for use by the school children and the latter was aid for use by religious school personnel. *Wolman*, it was contended, followed this pattern. The tests and services approved were primarily for the educational purposes of the state. That which was invalidated aided the primary educational mission of the religious schools.

In *Mitchell*, these specious distinctions are put to rest. What matters is whether the aid is nonreligious in content and neutrally allocated. What doesn't matter—at least to Justice Thomas and the Court plurality—are formalisms such as whether the aid is used by student or teacher or even whether a secular tool is put to some religious use later. Said the plurality: "The ultimate beneficiaries of . . . aid are the students who attend the schools that receive that aid, and this is so regardless of whether individual students lug computers to school each day, or as [school officials] more sensibly provided [in *Mitchell*], the schools receive the computers." Justices O'Connor and Breyer are less generous here, though not fatally so.

*Mitchell* clears up much of the intellectual mire, and the Court signaled that it has no present interest in manufacturing more. Opponents of aid postured that there were crucial distinctions between the aid sustained in *Agostini* and other cases. For example, in *Mitchell*, only 15 percent of the money from Chapter 2 of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981 went to children of low-income families. Eighty-five percent of the funds were simply allocated based upon the number of students in both public and private schools. In *Agostini*, the Chapter 1 aid was for remedial education and instructional services for students who reside in low-income areas. It is certainly good social policy to help the most disadvantaged; it is not constitutionally dispositive. In other words, nothing in the Constitution confines vouchers to the most disadvantaged, even if that is the most logical place to begin.

Nor did it matter in *Mitchell* that *Agostini*'s Chapter 1 benefits were delivered only by public school teachers, whereas the instructional materials and equipment under Chapter 2 were used by teachers in both public and religious schools. Just another red herring.

Moreover, the *Mitchell* plurality spent little time with the aid opponents' claim that the *Agostini* safeguards were more effective since every one delivering Chapter 1 benefits was warned against avoiding sectarian matters, whereas in *Mitchell* only one Chapter 2 contact person from each school attended a yearly Chapter 2 orientation session. As Justice O'Connor explicitly stated, first in *Agostini* and again in *Mitchell*, the likelihood that government assistance to the educational function of a religious school will advance religion should not be analyzed under blanket rules and presumptions, but rather with respect to the particular context, including an evaluation of

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safeguards in place. After neutral allocation, the plurality thought safeguards altogether unnecessary; the concurrence thought them adequate. Either way, they should be no impediment to a carefully designed voucher initiative.

Should neutrality or nondiscrimination be enough for constitutional purposes? Yes: nondiscrimination maintains the distinction between governmental promotion of religion and private religious decision making. In addition, neutrality or nondiscrimination prevents the government from using its financial muscle to influence religious belief or practice. Families should be able to choose religious or secular education for their children on the basis of their conscience and convictions, not because the government is funding one and not the other. Finally, when benefits are distributed evenhandedly on the basis of "neutral and objective criteria," there is no implied "endorsement" of religion or "symbolic union" between religion and the state.

Neutrality is relevant, but not sufficient, to the dissenters (Justices David Souter, John Paul Stevens, and Ruth Bader Ginsburg). When commentators opine that judicial appointments matter in presidential contests, these names and their presidential provenance should be remembered. Two of the three dissenters owe their positions to Republican Presidents whose appointment strategy was overly susceptible to the uninformed guidance of patronage and friendship, rather than the rule of law. In any event, the dissent would have continued the near categorical denial of any substantial assistance to a "pervasively sectarian" institution, like a religious school. For the dissenters, "there is no rule of religious equal protection to the effect that any expenditure for the benefit of religious school students is necessarily constitutional so long as public school pupils are favored on ostensibly identical terms."

But why shouldn't equality be the constitutional standard? For Justice Thomas and the plurality, there is no historically honest constitutional response other than that excluding religious institutions is the aftereffect of a "shameful pedigree" of bigotry. As the plurality explained, "Opposition to aid to 'sectarian' schools acquired prominence in the 1870s with Congress' consideration (and near passage) of the Blaine Amendment, which would have amended the Constitution to bar any aid to sectarian institutions. Consideration of the amendment arose at a time of pervasive hostility to the Catholic Church and to Catholics in general, and it was an open secret that 'sectarian' was code for 'Catholic.'" The religious nature of a recipient should not matter to the constitutional analysis, so long as the recipient adequately furthers the government's secular purpose.

Blaine's bigotry may still trouble the contemporary voucher effort by virtue of the state constitutional prohibitions that originated in that era. But Justice Thomas helped here, too, noting that the "exclusion of religious schools [from a general program of assistance] would raise serious questions under the Free Exercise Clause."

The acceptance of public money, of course, can come with strings, and if public funds do become generally available, religious school administrators will need to read the fine print. But there is no hint in the plurality or concurrence that the acceptance of public funds would—as a constitutional matter—necessitate less religious freedom within religious schools. The opponents of vouchers have from time to time threatened that religious schools would lose the ability to discriminate on religion in hiring, firing, student admissions, and student and faculty discipline. It is not clear, however, why the neutral provision of assistance should constitutionally deny the articulation of bona fide religious distinctions. It is well settled that Congress can exempt religious schools from the intrusive effect into religious practice of any generally applicable statute without violating the Establishment Clause. Of course, nothing suggests, nor would any constitutional doctrine approve, religious schools undertaking invidious discrimination on the basis of race. But as Congress flirts with expanding civil rights categories to include sexual orientation, the problem gets cloudier.

The ability of religious schools to retain their identity could potentially pose knotty problems for Justice O'Connor, who is very sensitive to any hypothetical reasonable observer feeling excluded or of secondary status. So what then is her standard? While agreeing with much of the plurality, Justice O'Connor continues to baffle voucher supporters with the proposition that any aid be "supplementary [and not] supplant non-Federal funds" and also with her recital that none of the funds "ever reach the coffers of religious schools." Justice O'Connor explains neither of these troubling details. As Justice Thomas points out in note 7 of the plurality opinion, "We have never delineated the [supplement/supplant] distinction's contours or held that it is constitutionally required." But since Chapter 2 aid was by definition supplemental, the Court didn't reach the issue. Watch for the opponents of vouchers to exploit this fact mercilessly.

One can hope that the Court will avoid these snares. Not to do so would obviously require quite a bit of judicial intervention and definition of exactly what is and is not *supplemental* assistance, what is and is not a *core* educational function, and the manufacturing of a constitutional difference between

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general tuition assistance and the now clearly approved economic advantages of books, buses, tax credits, sign language interpreters, remedial educators, and computers.

The importance of *Mitchell* cannot be overstated. Obviously, it is of direct relevance to the constitutionality of the Ohio and Florida voucher programs currently under review in lower federal and state courts. But as wonderfully clarifying as *Mitchell* is to constitutional doctrine, it does complicate political life. No longer will those running for national and state office be able to deny educational freedom or support religious discrimination with the plea that the Establishment Clause requires it. It doesn't. The day when school choice can be evaluated on its policy merits is at hand.

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## Robert P. George

In 1993, Colorado enacted a law prohibiting any person within one hundred feet of a "health care facility" to approach—indeed, to come within eight feet of—another person in order to hand that person "a leaflet or handbill," "display a sign," or "engage in oral protest, education, or counseling with that person." A straightforward violation of the First Amendment's prohibition of "laws abridging the freedom of speech," right? Not according to a solid majority of six Justices of the Supreme Court.

In *Hill v. Colorado*, liberal Justices John Paul Stevens, David Souter, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and Stephen Breyer, joined by the centrist Sandra Day O'Connor and the conservative William Rehnquist, ruled that Colorado's statute is a constitutionally legitimate exercise of the state's police powers. It is, Justice Stevens assured his fellow citizens in the opinion for the Court, a "content-neutral" restriction that regulates, "not speech," but merely certain "places where some speech may occur." Got that?

Wait a minute, you say. Rehnquist's vote we can, perhaps, understand. He has never taken an especially expansive view of First Amendment limitations on state police powers. But aren't the liberal justices self-described champions of the most generous understanding of individual freedoms—particularly the right of freedom of speech?

Liberal jurists and their supporters typically say that burning the American flag, for example, is constitutionally protected speech. They insist that Nazis have every right to parade their hate past the homes of elderly Holocaust survivors living in a quiet residential neighborhood in Skokie, Illinois. That, too, is what the Constitution means by "free speech." Indeed, not all that long ago liberal Justices of the Supreme Court were accusing the State of Indiana of shredding the First Amendment by enforcing public nudity laws against table top dancers at the Kitty Kat Lounge in downtown South Bend. Lewdly wiggling one's naked body in a public barroom is, once again, "free speech."

But "protesting," "displaying a sign," "counseling," "handing out a leaflet" in front of a "health care facility"—that is *not* constitutionally protected free speech.

What on earth is going on here?

No doubt you've guessed by now. The so-called "health care" facilities that Colorado's law was designed to shield from protests, signs, counseling, leaflets, and the like are, of course, *abortion clinics*. The women entering these specially protected facilities are not sick, they are pregnant. The "choices" they are about to execute are not "health care" choices, but rather what abortion defender Ronald Dworkin, with remarkable candor, describes as "choices for death." And when it comes to immunizing such "choices" from legal restriction or even private remonstration, the Court's liberals can be counted upon to flip on the switch of what Justice Antonin Scalia, writing in dissent, describes as "the ad hoc nullification machine that [is] set in motion to push aside whatever doctrines of constitutional law stand in the way of the highly favored practice of abortion."

Abortion is pure destruction. It destroys the human beings whose lives are snuffed out in utero. It is destructive of the interests of women who are so very often, and in so many respects, truly abortion's "secondary victims." And, as Scalia does not tire of remarking, it has proven to be destructive of the institutions of American democratic self-government and, indeed, the basic integrity of our constitutional system. Abortion's record is one of taint and damage to everything it touches, not least, as even Justice Anthony Kennedy (who, after having cast his lot with the pro-abortion justices in the 1992 *Casey* decision, joined the dissent in *Hill*) now seems to see, fundamental American constitutional principles. Free speech is only its most recent victim.

Does anyone doubt—even for a moment—how the liberal Justices would have resolved the case if, instead of abortion clinics, *coal mines*, for example, or *gun dealerships*, or, heaven help us, *tobacco shops* would have been the "facilities" singled out for unique immunity?

Chief Justice Rehnquist's vote, no doubt, would have remained the same. But who really thinks that

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Justices Stevens, Souter, Ginsburg, Breyer, or even O'Connor would have found restrictions on protesting, leafleting, etc. to be regulations "not of speech, but merely of certain places where some speech may occur"? They would have voted to invalidate the law instantly.

*Hill v. Colorado* came out as it did *only because the speech actually restricted by the law is pro-life speech.* The majority's proposal that the Colorado statute is "content-neutral" is a sham—an embarrassingly obvious one.

So the Court upheld a state law that it should have struck down. Too bad, someone might say. But shouldn't critics of "the judicial usurpation of politics" take at least some comfort in the fact that the error was on the side of democracy, as it were? After all, the Court's ruling left intact a piece of democratically enacted legislation. If the liberal Justices are guilty of partiality and hypocrisy in *Hill,* isn't the same true of their critics who have, in the past, sharply criticized the Justices for usurping legislative authority and substituting their personal preferences for the contrary judgments of the people's elected representatives? Isn't that their criticism of the Court's decision in *Roe v. Wade*?

This canard is easily disposed of. Critics of the regime of judicial rule, such as those of us who contributed to FIRST THINGS' November 1996 symposium, "The End of Democracy? The Judicial Usurpation of Politics," do not object to the judicial enforcement of constitutional guarantees. We are not radical democrats who believe that judicial review of legislation is in principle unconstitutional and illegitimate. What we object to is, first, the judicial manufacture of constitutional law to displace *without constitutional warrant* the duly enacted judgments of the people and their elected representatives, and, second, the idea of judicial supremacy that treats the executive and legislative branches of the federal government as impotent to do anything but bow down before unconstitutional exercises of judicial power, however blatant and destructive of the constitutional order.

Although some of us are Catholics, we believe that Jehovah's Witnesses and others who oppose Catholic teaching, for example, have a judicially enforceable First Amendment right, even within a hundred feet of a church, peacefully to approach Catholics to talk them out of attending Mass and hand them pamphlets claiming that the Pope is the Antichrist and the Church is the Whore of Babylon. Unlike the alleged constitutional right to abortion, which is a pure judicial fabrication in the cause of the contemporary liberal moral-political agenda, the guarantee of freedom of speech, which centrally protects the advocacy of *ideas* (the stretch to things like nude dancing is absurd), is a true constitutional principle. Good and honest judges will actively enforce it—and they will do so in an impartial and truly content-neutral way. The ideas of Jehovah's Witnesses and Catholics, of defenders of the rights of the unborn and advocates of abortion, are fully, and equally, protected.

Even more than the tragic—truly frightening—decision invalidating laws against partial-birth abortion in *Stenberg v. Carhart,* the Court's ruling in *Hill* shows that what is driving liberal jurisprudence is not simply a failure to understand the need for "judicial restraint" in our scheme of constitutional government. The problem is not, or not simply, that Justices such as Stevens and Souter have embraced a "judicial activist" philosophy of judging. What propels the liberal jurisprudential project is—*liberal ideology.* The project is utterly unprincipled. Liberal judges will be "activist" or "restrained" depending on what, in a given case, best serves whatever liberal cause is at issue. Whether they are invalidating a law protecting partially born babies, or upholding one restricting the speech of pro-life counselors, their invocation of constitutional principles merely provides rhetorical cover for decisions dictated by ideological goals.

Of course, I should not sweep too broadly in condemning "liberal" jurists. There are honest liberals, and, truth be told, more than a few are alarmed by the outcome and embarrassed by the argument in *Hill.* They do not accept, any more than do conservative critics of the Court, the claim of the majority Justices that "the Constitution made me do it." As true friends of First Amendment freedoms, they recognize that the Constitution dictated an altogether different result.

May I respectfully suggest that they say so publicly?

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## Michael M. Uhlmann

"God save the United States and this Honorable Court!" From the beginning, every session of the Supreme Court has opened with that prayerful injunction. Now that five Justices have given their constitutional blessing to partial-birth abortion, we'd clearly be better off if the prayer were hereafter printed at the *conclusion* of Court decisions.

Justice Stephen Breyer's opinion in *Stenberg v. Carhart* is many things, none of them good. The law reviews will pinch, poke, and prod the text in their usual pedantic fashion, but in truth nothing more remains to be said. Abortion on request at every stage

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of the unborn child's development, up to and including the process of birth, is now the law of the land. The argument advanced to reach that conclusion will not bear the weight placed upon it, and belaboring the text only clothes it with undeserved dignity. As Justice Antonin Scalia pointed out in dissent, we are in the realm of ideology, not reason. Fashionable opinion will of course salute Breyer's work as a finely wrought piece of legal art, but that quarter praises even wretched work as long as the result comports with its interests. Defenders of the unborn will in turn dissect *Stenberg* in devastating and minute detail, as they have prior cases; but no criticism, however harsh and from whatever source, can possibly match the tone or content of what was said by dissenting members of the Court itself. Justices Scalia, Clarence Thomas, and Anthony Kennedy were each in their own way eloquent and powerfully compelling. They picked the majority opinion clean, down to the bone. The only news here, and thank God for it, is that Kennedy seems finally to have seen the error of his ways.

*Stenberg* reminds us—as if we needed reminding—that the majority does its abortion work under the spell of an ideological talisman from which no fact and no amount of contrary reasoning is likely to rouse it. Twenty-seven years are proof enough. The error was bred in the bone of *Roe v. Wade*, which established the central legal fiction that has ever since controlled the Court's abortion jurisprudence. The fiction is that the Constitution is bound to respect only the pregnant woman's decision, whence it follows that legal protection for an unborn child must exist largely, if not exclusively, at her sufferance. From that predicate all else follows. Taking the long view, all litigation since *Roe* has been little more than a working out of the necessary but previously unacknowledged implications of the original flawed premise. That "thing" without which no controversy would exist at all, the child who lies (as the common law put it) *en ventre sa mère*, is not only treated as a nonperson; he has vanished from the legal horizon almost altogether. Lizards and lousewort enjoy greater attention and legal protection.

This tragic denouement follows inexorably from Harry Blackmun's handiwork in *Roe*. His labors there produced a breathtaking piece of legal prestidigitation: he invented a creature previously unknown to law, medicine, philosophy, or for that matter even poetry. But no sooner had he conjured the apparition than he promptly caused it to disappear. He called his creation "potential" life notwithstanding that it was already palpably present, and vested it with magical properties of growth even while valuing those properties at precisely zero. Despite multiple opportunities in ensuing litigation, the Court has never bothered itself to explain why this "mere" biological potency deserves our attention, much less why, when, or how it becomes a rights-bearing creature entitled to legal protection. To pause overlong on the nature of that "thing" threatens to expose the disingenuousness that produced the governing fiction in the first place; too many inconvenient questions have to be asked and answered. In the Court's hands, the unborn child has come to occupy roughly the same status as a corpse at a wake: its presence must be acknowledged to get things going, but it is not thereafter expected to perform any function.

This bizarre fiction, in which the child is at once irreducibly present yet not at all, has driven abortion litigation at the Court for nearly thirty years. Rather than trying to parse the tortured reasoning of these cases, we would do better to ponder the mindset that routinely produces it. To understand abortion as anything other than the taking of a human life requires the suspension of the simplest sort of moral reasoning and common sense. Ask a woman who has recently discovered that she is pregnant—a woman, that is, not otherwise animated by murderous intent—and she will tell you that she is going to have a *baby*. Unless encumbered by a thoroughly modern education, she will not typically speak of the life within her as a "potential" anything, nor refer to it by any of the other ideological neologisms the smart set invented to avert their gaze from the bloody consequences of their intentions. She will think and talk and fret about her *child*, whose tangible presence informs her every conscious moment that her own humanity is now fully shared by the little one she nurtures within her womb.

This sort of elementary knowledge is routinely ignored or denied in the Court's reckoning. Worse, it is contorted until reason is stood on its head. We are asked to believe that what everyone of normal sensibility already knows is really not known at all. This is no easy task. One must labor mightily to master the philosophical, legal, and semantic distortions necessary to vest abortion with constitutional dignity. But a convenient fiction repeated often enough eventually acquires the status of a Big Lie, and Justice Breyer's opinion in *Stenberg* is chiefly an exercise in which the majority tries to convince itself that the lie still carries sway. Nothing surprises in this case save for the willful persistence with which the majority shores up its jerry-built house of legal abstractions.

The facts of partial-birth abortion are, of course, unusually horrific, and no doubt the Justices would just as soon have avoided them. In the event, they could not bring themselves to describe the deed except with the sterile detachment of medical terminology, and even that was gingerly done. In the face of facts like these, only the practiced ingenuity of a fancy legal education could induce five members of the

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Court to render so impassive a judgment of execution. But render it they did, and by a mode of reasoning, moreover, that will present few difficulties in the next case when yet more repellent facts present themselves.

Let there be no mistake about it: *Stenberg* has brought us at last to the abyss of constitutionally sanctioned homicide. Even the exquisitely tuned intellectual seismograph of Daniel Patrick Moynihan cannot distinguish between partial-birth abortion and infanticide. What has escaped his contemplation will surely not be discovered by any of the Court's majority so long as the pregnant woman's interests remain the more or less exclusive focus of its concern. Justifying infanticide will be, pardon the expression, child's play for sophisticated lawyers bent on reaching a foreordained conclusion. No one can predict what the majority will do when it confronts a child intended for destruction but nevertheless fully born alive, but we know this much: nothing in *Stenberg*'s reasoning will prevent that child's destruction, too. The Justices may in the end pull up short, but if so, they will have to abandon *Stenberg* and, with it, the original fiction that has sustained the abortion cases all these years.

It is in the nature of fictions that they can sustain their magic only so long as a willing suspension of disbelief governs their development. Once reality is allowed to trespass upon the presentation, the magic can no longer work its effect. Unlike stories, where the pretense can go on forever, legal fictions tend to have a limited shelf life. A storyteller controls not only the characters, but the plot. Litigation, by contrast, has a way of generating new facts beyond judicial control. Palpable facts—unanticipated, stubborn, and sometimes irreducible facts—keep intruding; they constantly threaten to expose the fragility of the operative legal fiction.

It has been so with abortion litigation for three decades. As the cases have multiplied, the tangible omnipresence of that "other" has become progressively more difficult to ignore or explain away, and ever more strenuous exertions of will and disingenuousness are required to sustain *Roe*'s controlling legal fiction. Ever since *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, the Justices have found it increasingly necessary to employ diktat to justify their judgment. Their argument now relies almost entirely on the imperialism of Alice's Red Queen, who, when confronted with palpably impossible facts contrary to all logic, finally insisted, "I said it once, I said it twice, it must be so!"

The wheel has come full circle. *Stenberg* takes us back to *Roe*, when Justice Byron White, in dissent, condemned the majority's judgment as an exercise in "raw judicial power." Everything that has happened since confirms the accuracy of White's assessment. The majority, in its obduracy, appears to have learned nothing and forgotten nothing. Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, who was wiser on these matters ten years ago than she is today, once wrote that the Court's reasoning in the abortion cases was "on a collision course with itself." In *Stenberg*, after surveying an accident scene with broken bodies strewn all across the landscape, she and four of her colleagues managed to convince themselves that no collision occurred after all. Having created the fiction in the first instance to persuade others, they now fully believe it themselves. No evidence, no argument will ever suffice to alter their self-created delusion. It is time for them to go. God save the United States and this Honorable Court indeed.

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## Michael W. McConnell

After several sleepy and unimportant terms, the Supreme Court this year reminded us of its importance—excessive importance, some will say. It handed down a series of blockbuster decisions affecting American life in profound ways. With a few important (and expected) exceptions—notably the partial-birth abortion case and a silly but destructive football prayer decision—the term was cause for celebration. Federalism was strengthened by invalidation of the Violence Against Women Act, freedom of religion and choice in education were advanced by *Mitchell v. Helms*, freedom of association was protected in the Boy Scouts decision, parental rights won their most important victory in decades, and the limits on lawmaking by administrative agency were reaffirmed in the tobacco case. All in all, the Supreme Court term strengthened the independence and vitality of civil society and fostered the decentralization of government power.

But the term was also a little scary. To be sure, most of the important cases came out the right way. But the Four Dissenters (David Souter, Stephen Breyer, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and John Paul Stevens) made it clear that they will not budge an inch, on any issue, no matter what. Their extremist rhetoric, in contrast to the cool, almost boring prose of most of the conservative majority, proclaimed their intention to make big changes if only they can get another vote. The Court hangs by a thread.

In the next few years, in all likelihood, three Justices will retire. That might not matter so much if decisions were squarely based on the law—on text, history, practice, and precedent. But in the partisan atmosphere of

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today's Supreme Court, decisions are based on the Rule of Five—five votes win—and not much more than that. In many cases, there is barely a veneer of collegiality or deliberation. Rarely in history have the divisions on the Court been so raw.

For example, in *Kimel v. Board of Regents*, the Court held for the fifth time that Congress cannot override state sovereign immunity. Justice Stevens, who dissented in the earlier cases, joined by the rest of the Four, called the principle underlying these decisions "so profoundly mistaken and so fundamentally inconsistent with the Framers' conception of our constitutional order that it has forsaken any claim to the usual deference or respect owed to decisions of this Court." (This from a Justice who insists that *Roe v. Wade* must be followed in every detail.) The majority responded that the Dissenters' refusal to follow precedents when they disagree with them "makes it difficult to engage in additional meaningful debate." To the rest of us, it means that constitutional law is determined not by authority and argument, but by raw voting power. Whoever appoints the next few Justices will determine the meaning of the Constitution in dozens of important areas.

Most of this term's cases should not have been so hard, and the decisions should not have been so close. Take *Boy Scouts of America v. Dale*, in which the Court held it unconstitutional for a state court to force the Boy Scouts to appoint openly homosexual scoutmasters. It is fundamental to a free society that private citizens must be able to form groups to espouse their moral views and choose leaders accordingly. No one has the civil right to assume leadership of an organization when he does not agree with the organization's message. That should have been uncontroversial. The notion that every private group must be open to every person, without "discrimination," means that every group must be alike. That would be the death knell of genuine diversity.

It would be comforting to think that even supporters of gay rights would recognize the importance of this principle. It used to be a commonplace that freedom must be protected even for those with whom we disagree. Yet not one of the Four Dissenters saw it that way.

Justice Stevens' dissenting opinion for the Four was the most strident of the term. "Like equally atavistic opinions about racial groups," he wrote, the opinion that homosexual conduct is immoral is "nourished by sectarian doctrine." The harm created by this "prejudice" would be "aggravated by creation of a constitutional shield for a policy that is itself the product of a habitual way of thinking about strangers." Translation: if we think your opinions are "atavistic" or "prejudiced," or the product of "sectarian doctrine," you forfeit your First Amendment rights. Is there a civil libertarian in the house?

Once upon a time, liberals were in the forefront of protecting the freedom to dissent from the orthodoxies of the majority. That is the purpose of a "constitutional shield." I like to think that Justice William Brennan (to name one honorable example) would have replied that it is utterly irrelevant whether the Justices think the Boy Scouts' views are right or wrong. The issue was whether there is a right of freedom of association—for everyone. It is a sad day when the so-called "liberals" on the Court bloc vote against civil liberties when the dissenter is a group they deem "atavistic."

It is even more frightening to contemplate the possibility that Justice Stevens' opinion may have been drafted as a majority. There is considerable evidence that was the case. It is customary for each Justice to be assigned at least one majority opinion from each sitting, and highly unusual for one Justice to write two majorities in major cases from a single sitting. Yet Justice Stevens produced no majority opinion for the April sitting, and Chief Justice William Rehnquist wrote the majority for two. Moreover, with its lengthy recitation of the facts, sparse citations to the majority, and comprehensive analytical structure, Justice Stevens' opinion has the outward appearance of a majority opinion. Could it be that someone (Justice Anthony Kennedy?) flipped his vote at the last minute, turning Chief Justice Rehnquist's dissent into a majority?

*Mitchell v. Helms*, the school aid case, presents a less somber picture. Although Justice Souter wrote an interminable (forty-nine page, thirty-two footnote) dissent, Justice Breyer broke from the Four to cast the sixth vote to uphold a program of assistance to nonpublic schools. In a gutsy, powerful, plurality opinion, Justice Clarence Thomas cut through the "vast, perplexing desert" of fine lines and distinctions that have plagued this area of the law, and announced a simple and logical rule: the government must be neutral toward religion and religious institutions. Most notably, he condemned the line of decisions that held that so-called "pervasively sectarian" institutions are ineligible to participate in public programs. He pointed out the "shameful pedigree" of this term in anti-Catholic bigotry and the "offensiveness" of "trolling through" the religious beliefs of institutions to determine whether they "take their religion [too] seriously." (What a contrast to Justice Stevens' notion that moral judgments based on "sectarian doctrine" are undeserving of constitutional respect.) He held that "the religious nature of the recipient should not matter to the constitutional analysis, so long as the recipient adequately furthers the government's secular purpose." Just so.

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Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's concurrence, joined by Justice Breyer (his first break with the Four Dissenters on any case of significance), was more cautious and less clear. But even these two "moderates" made major steps toward a sensible Establishment Clause jurisprudence, stripped of the old hostility to religion (and especially to Catholic institutions). Moreover, Justice O'Connor strongly implied that a "true private-choice program" would be permissible. That is good news for school choice advocates.

The question remains whether any of these decisions really matter. Usually, constitutional law builds like the sediment at the bottom of a lake, with each layer affecting but not dictating the shape of the next. In the almost thirty years since "conservatives" have presumably controlled the Court, they have overruled only a handful of significant precedents, and usually only after they had been thoroughly undermined by the course of decision making. That respect for the past reasserted itself this term in the surprising 7-2 reaffirmation of the benighted *Miranda* decision, and it played a part in the partial-birth abortion case.

The Four Dissenters apparently are prepared to sweep aside the unwelcome decisions of the past, if only they can get the votes. To an extent rarely seen in the history of the nation, the content and meaning of the Constitution appear to be up for a vote in the next presidential election.

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## "the geography of my faith"

this is
the tent of my anticipation
at the entrance of which
Sarah laughing stands

this is
the hilltop of my affliction
upon which
Isaac lies bewildered bound

this is
the spring of my abandonment
to which
Hagar has weeping fled

this is
the mill of my aspirations
at which
Samson blinded labors

this is
the geography of my faith
in which
in me my Saviour lives

**Sean Kinsella**

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# Catholic Educations

***Ronald Herzman***

I went to Brooklyn Prep—"The Jesuit High School in Brooklyn," as the blue and white prospectus put it. At least in the Greek Honors class at Brooklyn Prep, it was somehow clear that those of us who wanted to get a first-rate college education would likewise go to a Jesuit College. The Jesuit colleges that mostly divided up the spoils—the thirty-five Greeks in the class of 1961—were Fordham, Holy Cross, Georgetown, and Boston College.

Fordham was the default, for folks who couldn't or didn't want to leave the city, and somewhat déclassé because one would most likely be going there as a day hop. Holy Cross did a good job of pushing its image as an elite liberal arts college. Our student council president went there. Georgetown had a reputation then of being a kind of playboy school, which probably meant no more than that it was preppier than the others, and we didn't really know about preppy in Brooklyn, especially in 1961. It did manage to grab two of the smartest folks we had in our class, but given the kind of admissions profile it has now, it is odd to think that at the time it was not an especially difficult school to get into. Boston College had the reputation as the most intellectual, the place that was really looking for "brains" (as geeks were called in those days). Boston College made it into our junior year Greek class, since its motto, "Ever to Excel," comes from Homer, and we were starting Homer then. My best friend at Brooklyn Prep went to BC.

And then there was Manhattan College. Manhattan was in a curious position because it was the only Catholic college in New York City that had an engineering school, and so a lot of Brooklyn Prep kids who were good in science wound up there, even though it was not run by the Jesuits but by the Christian Brothers. Manhattan had another program that was siphoning off prime Jesuit talent, and not just from Brooklyn Prep. In the College of Arts and Sciences at Manhattan, sometime in the fifties, there emerged a small program that was an interesting variation on the great books program at St. John's College. What I know now, thanks to James Burtchaell's book *The Dying of the Light*, is that the idea for the program didn't come directly from Annapolis, nor did it spring full-blown from the minds of the Manhattan faculty; it must have been imported from their sister Christian Brothers school, St. Mary's College in California, which had developed a similar program in the forties.

There was a charismatic and subversive English teacher at Brooklyn Prep, Charlie Winans, who had no particular reverence for the Jesuit mystique, and who heretically thought that the Jesuits were simply one order among many—it was from him that I first learned about a non-Jesuit saint named Francis of Assisi, for example. He would steer favorite students toward the Manhattan program: four core courses each year, in literature, philosophy, history, and fine arts, starting with the ancient world and going up to the twentieth century. So he convinced me (and several others in our year and in the years before me and even for a few years after me) to go there, convincing me in the process that it was better to winter in New York City than, say, Worcester, Massachusetts.

So I turned down an NROTC scholarship to Holy Cross and became a commuter at Manhattan College. My first year there was an academic apocalypse, all but impossible to explain to my current students, who believe themselves to be crushed under the weight of their five-course loads. In addition to the four core liberal arts classes, we were required to take

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courses in science, math, language, and theology. There were science and math courses especially tailored, which is to say watered down, for the liberal arts folks, but a combination of stupid advisement and intransigent administration on their part and academic machismo on mine meant that I wound up taking both calculus and the physics course designed for the scientists and the engineers. (In case I didn't get the point, the textbook was entitled *Physics for Students of Science and Engineering.*) So there I was, way out of my league in any case, taking courses that I simply didn't have time or room for.

Then there was the language requirement. I had studied Latin for four years, Greek for three, and French for two at Brooklyn Prep. There was no classics department to speak of at Manhattan, at least compared with places like Fordham and Holy Cross, so I signed up for French. But somebody in the orientation process at Manhattan was either impressed or confused by my credentials and thought that seven years of classical languages in high school had somehow prepared me to leap over two years of French in college, and I wound up as a first-semester freshman in a course in Seventeenth-Century French Literature with a bunch of juniors and seniors. Corneille and Racine with the French majors, calculus and physics with the engineers.

And then there were the core courses. Two weeks into the first semester, our ancient philosophy professor's reserve unit was called up, and he went off to the army. His chagrin at this unlikely turn of events was probably only slightly greater than my own when I learned that he was being replaced in my section (and only mine) by Alfred DiLascia, terror of the philosophy department and indeed of the entire college. Feared as the hardest grader in the school, he was a fanatic for text crawling and impossible exams, and hadn't the slightest concern with what freshmen could or could not do. Read the text, he would say. I thought I knew how. Then I took his midterm. And the texts he had us read for the rest of the year, in a two-credit course, were eleven dialogues of Plato, including the *Republic,* the *Theatetus,* and the *Sophist*; the *Ethics* and the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle; and the *Essential Works of Plotinus.* But the hardest course in the core (and looking back at it, probably the best) was ancient history. Again, a teacher new to the course overestimated (by his own later admission) our capacities: huge chunks of the Old Testament, all of Herodotus, and all of Thucydides, along with a couple of books on ancient Near East cosmology and an ancient history textbook.

That leaves theology. I think in retrospect that the biggest structural deficiency in the Manhattan College liberal arts program was its failure to integrate theology with the core subjects. We could have read the Bible from cover to cover that year. Instead, we studied something called Fundamental Theology, using a text that had been written by Brother Luke Salm (who is cited several times in Father Burtchaell's notes as an authority on the history of the Christian Brothers, as well as mentioned with respect in the text itself as a "wise and faithful educator"). Though this course did not put anything like the demands on us that the core did, mine was the only section of the course that year taught by Brother Luke himself, who had a reputation as the toughest grader in that department, and who was one of the few brothers at the time who had real theological credentials.

I wish I could say this boot camp of the mind was an unequivocally good experience, one that turned me into a deep thinker and a practicing scholar. Looking back, I still feel pretty good about the fact that I survived, especially since I was also spending three hours a day riding the IRT. I did learn how to read on the subway, an important skill. That first year no doubt also helped me to take learning very seriously. I was certainly exposed to an awful lot; later, when I got to graduate school, I was genuinely surprised that there were people there who had not read Plato, let alone Plotinus. And I think that first year helped me later in another way as well: nothing that I subsequently experienced was as demanding as my first year of college. But it was too much. Boot camp of the mind, at least one that extends over a full year, is a precarious and even dangerous way to learn. Out of necessity I learned how to cut corners, and to cut corners by appearing to know more than I really did. Appearing to know more than I really do has always threatened to turn subtly from a methodology to a mentality, from a survival skill to a way of (academic) life.

In sophomore year I flourished. Without science and math to worry about, and with more normal expectations in history and philosophy, it was a lot of fun. The theology courses that year were mediocre at best. In French I was now reading nineteenth-century poetry and when I recited the stuff (fortunately, mostly to myself) I sounded a lot like Bill Murray trying to get Andie MacDowell into bed in *Groundhog Day.* But it was the four core courses in the Middle Ages that really did it for me. We looked at Gothic cathedrals in fine arts, and in philosophy we reversed the usual priorities and read a lot of Augustine and a little Aquinas. In history we read some Gibbon and Henri Pirenne. And in John Nagle's world literature class the scales fell from my eyes: we went from Augustine's *Confessions* to Old English poetry to the *Song of Roland* to Arthurian romances the first semester, and the second semester read a little Chaucer and a lot of Dante, the entire

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*Divine Comedy* in fact. Even at St. John's they don't do that. I write about Dante now, and teach Dante as well (and Chaucer, and Arthurian Romance, and a great books humanities course required of all our students). But nowadays when I'm feeling frisky about a healthy Dante enrollment of, say, thirty students, I remind myself that all 110 sophomore liberal arts students read the entire *Comedy* at Manhattan College in Spring 1963, even government majors, including Rudy Giuliani.

To continue the narrative into the second part of my college career would entail special mention of my junior world literature course, which went from Petrarch to Cervantes to Milton to Swift. But that's not the point of the story. The point of the story is that the program no longer exists. My own wildly idiosyncratic and overdone freshman year notwithstanding, it was an imaginative and daring program. It had flaws, to be sure. Without the luxury of St. John's wonderfully low student-faculty ratio, we were probably fed too much and we discussed too little. We had to do a lot of writing, but for the same reason our writing was not critiqued thoroughly or rigorously enough. From the vantage point of the present, the program's lack of attention to the non-Western world seems an obvious fault; less obvious but in some ways more puzzling was its almost total lack of attention to America. Perhaps the biggest flaw was that sometimes the program sacrificed depth for breadth. But it had teachers, really good teachers, who were up for it, and who treated us accordingly. It had some students who appreciated it and thrived on it. Since we were all doing the same stuff, teachers and students alike, we could and did all talk together about serious things. Best, I think, it allowed us, indeed forced us, to make connections between texts and ideas and disciplines. It was a noble experiment and a noble alternative.

But it didn't survive the sixties, which were really the seventies. It didn't survive relevance. It didn't survive the financial problems Manhattan College was having. And it didn't survive the collapse of the feeder system. A few years after I graduated from high school, Brooklyn Prep was sending its honors kids (who weren't taking Greek anymore) to Columbia, not to Fordham or Manhattan. A few years after that, it wasn't sending them anywhere at all. I don't know all the details of what happened at Manhattan, but I'm willing to bet that most if not all of them precisely parallel the collapse of Manhattan's sister great books program at St. Mary's College, as described in Burtchaell's book.

In 1972, the New York Province of the Society of Jesus closed Brooklyn Prep and sold the buildings to the City University of New York. It became Medgar Evers College. I was close to this one because many of the faculty were my friends, including both my old mentor and the Jesuit priest who had presided at my marriage two years earlier. By now, several of my contemporaries were also teaching there. It closed because of the usual suspects: first, the financial drain on an institution that could no longer count on a sufficient number of Jesuits to roll back their salaries into the operating expenses; second, the changing neighborhood—Crown Heights was getting dangerous, it was said, nothing more than an extension of Bedford-Stuyvesant, and the school was therefore no longer appealing to students from other parts of Brooklyn, let alone to the fairly large contingent of students who used to commute in from Long Island in my day. Besides, a whole bunch of new Catholic high schools had opened up in Brooklyn and in Queens and on the island, and Brooklyn Prep was already losing students anyway. A lot of people I talked to during the crunch time thought this was a golden opportunity—whom should the Jesuit High School in Brooklyn be educating if not kids from Bed Sty? And a lot of these same people wondered after the fact about the connection between the changing demographics and the decision to close Brooklyn Prep as opposed to any of the other high schools in the Province.

It was handled very badly. No one among a faculty that had labored long and hard and well for very little was told much of anything. They received assurances from an administration that also, as it turned out, hadn't been told much of anything. No one thought it was really going to happen. No one thought it could happen. The analogy is probably a bit over the top, but back then (and even now) it felt a whole lot like the betrayal fifteen years earlier in 1957 when the Dodgers closed up shop in Brooklyn and headed west. The connection is kept alive for me because I watched the wrecking ball successfully take on Ebbets Field from the window of my sophomore classroom. That was my first big lesson in mutability and for me the point of the analogy is exactly the fact that in both instances no one really thought it could happen. But it did happen, and a lot of lives were badly out of kilter for a long time after Brooklyn Prep closed. It's very hard to realize that in the final analysis, among those who make the decisions, you were not even part of the equation. Betrayal by those who have been given a special trust, as my buddy Dante puts it.

Fast forward seventeen years to 1989. I am at another Jesuit high school, on another coast, in another world: Bellarmine Prep, a very different kind of high school, where Silicon Valley sends its children to prepare for Stanford. Chris Lorenc, a fine English

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teacher at Bellarmine, and one of the participants in an NEH seminar on Dante that I had directed the previous summer in Italy, has invited me here to teach a few of his classes. I am delighted to be at a place where his seniors are actually reading Dante's *Paradiso.* He is introducing me to the Jesuit administration. To make conversation I tell them that I am one of them, that I went to a Jesuit high school. "Which one?" "Do you remember Brooklyn Prep?" The tone of the conversation changes abruptly. One of them becomes very serious, his expression changes, and he says, "That was a terrible thing, a terrible thing." He talks for five minutes about the tragedy, about the awful way it was handled. The reverberations continue among the Jesuits.

I am an academic orphan. Of the two schools that did the most to shape me one does not exist any longer, and the other does not exist in any form that I would recognize. I see myself as a small and ineffective one-man public relations office for two defunct organizations, hoping in some small way to capture the flavor of what has too easily been caricatured and belittled as it has been left behind.

I start with an interesting fact that connects high school with college: at both Brooklyn Prep and Manhattan College, the best teachers were the laymen, not the Jesuits, not the Christian Brothers, even though teaching excellence is certainly no small part of the self-identity of both orders.

Why should this have been so, and what conclusions should we draw from it? I think it was so because the priests and brothers were not, for the most part, in love with their subjects. They were often trained in a particular discipline because that's where the order saw the need—that is, in those cases where they *were* in fact trained for their discipline—and I sometimes had the feeling that a brother teaching English or a priest teaching chemistry would have been just as effective teaching accounting or economics. They were obedient servants. This is a virtue not to be underestimated—it is the virtue that made the system possible at all—but it also meant that at some level many of them were faking it.

So one conclusion might be that the schools would have been better off without the brothers and the priests, or at least if they had kept them in administration. I have come to the opposite conclusion. I think that somehow the brothers and the priests were enablers for the lay teachers, and this was as important as their teaching. Having priests and brothers on the faculty attracted a certain kind of idealist who might have gone elsewhere without them, or maybe turned people into idealists who didn't know they were idealists at all until they came to teach there. They were in schools where it was very hard not to see teaching as a vocation rather than a job or even a profession, because an embodied definition of vocation was already in place in capital letters. Whether they liked it or not, they taught because it was a vocation, not a job, but they didn't have to be up front about it. They could even pretend to themselves that they were doing it for less high-minded purposes.

Unlike the blackrobes, a surprisingly large percentage of the lay teachers were in love with their subjects. They were also freed from worry about large questions about the point of it all. In a sense, the big picture was already taken care of. They were freed from worry about assessment, or discipline, or national standards. They had a lot more time to teach. And so, as I see in retrospect, with comparisons drawn among other places from my own thirty years of teaching, the best of them were wildly eccentric in ways that were healthy and in ways that no longer have a real part in today's structured system. There was room for a lot of healthy and creative craziness, in its flamboyant outward and geeky introspective varieties.

I think of Harry Hazelton, coming to us—eighteen-year-old freshmen—live from some parallel universe, pacing back and forth, little flecks of spit on his lips the signal that he was really into it, lecturing about nineteenth-century philhellenism and its tendency to over-intellectualize the Greek world: "You see the figures walking around on the vases with these enormous erections, and I don't think they were contemplating philosophy at all." I think of Harry Blair in his Brooks Brothers rumpled elegance somewhere between Peter O'Toole playing Mr. Chips and Oscar Wilde playing Oscar Wilde, doing Act Four, Scene Seven of *King Lear* so that there wasn't a dry eye in the house: "No cause, no cause." Or I think simply of the bizarre notion that at Brooklyn Prep they thought that the best way to educate a bunch of working-class kids mixed in with a few middle-class kids was to have everybody in the school do four years of Latin.

When I was taking my turn as chair of the English Department at SUNY Geneseo, and frustrated by some particular sequence of events, my wife would tell me that my problem was that I wanted the college to be a monastery when it was really a corporation. She didn't mean it this way but I think one of the many reasons she was right is that I have found monks to be by and large more singular, more eccentric, and more interesting than corporate executives. Many of the best teachers I had at Brooklyn Prep and Manhattan wouldn't have made it in today's academic world because they had no sense of how to package themselves as professionals, a skill we all pick up by osmosis nowadays in graduate school and in starting out in

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our "careers." But a lot of the time that we spend making ourselves into professionals, they spent reading Dickens and Sophocles.

When I was browsing through *The Dying of the Light* and was as yet still uncertain about buying it, what put me over the top was the fact that, for the Catholics, Fr. Burtchaell's longest case study is Boston College. My son graduated from BC two years ago, with some pretty strong opinions about the place. The book provided me with a chance to look at the school from a very different perspective, and compare the considered opinions of two very articulate experts. However different the perspective, and however different the methods of articulation, they both saw the same school.

I attended a forum on student life during freshman orientation at Boston College, something for the parents to do while our children were off somewhere else being weaned. "Is there a drug problem on campus?" one of the parents asked during the question and answer session. I thought that the answer was thoughtful and is probably fairly accurate. "We don't think we have a problem with hard drugs here" (though my son would later assure me that there were plenty of the softer variety to go around). "The drug of choice at BC is alcohol, and it is a very serious problem, and here is how we are dealing with it." Fair enough. Who am I to assume a position of moral superiority? No one ever lost money opening another bar in Geneseo. Alcohol abuse is the name of the game at every college in the country and it is, indeed, a serious problem.

But my son had an interesting observation. He said that on football game days, tailgating starts sometime around nine o'clock in the morning, and that any student in the college could walk around with a keg on his head and no one would notice. It isn't just that alums and maybe even family offer a couple of beers to students. No big deal. Rather, 9 A.M. is the kickoff for a weekend's worth of drink-till-you-drop bingeing with all of the nonsense and damage that goes along with it, and this particular liturgical rite is pretty much officially sanctioned by a school that admits to having a huge problem with alcohol. I use this example to come to a point that Fr. Burtchaell makes, namely, that there is a dangerous difference at BC between rhetoric and reality.

My son, home for the holidays during his senior year, was asked at a party for the umpteenth time how he liked BC. I overheard him say something like the following: "My courses and my teachers have been good. I've made some good friends. I have a good living situation on campus—I like my apartment. I really like being in Boston. But I don't like Boston College." This is not an easy passage to interpret, as I would say to my literature students. Granted good teachers, good courses, good friends, good living, and Boston, what's left not to like? Wouldn't anyone gladly settle for that combination as the sum and substance of a good college experience? Maybe he was trying to take irony to a new level? No, having listened to him for four years on the subject, I realized when I overheard these remarks that he was being dead serious. I thought I had a clue or two about what he meant. Having read Fr. Burtchaell on BC, I now think I have more than a clue.

BC talks about diversity, and is quick to point out how much more diverse it is now than in the old days when it drew mostly from Irish Boston and from Jesuit high schools on the eastern seaboard. But comfortable, affluent, suburban kids from Long Island look an awful lot like comfortable, affluent, suburban kids from Los Angeles, Houston, and Denver. The suburban preppy jockishness of the place is what is most apparent to the naked eye—and if my two experts are anywhere near right about the place, it is the outward and visible sign of a suburban preppy jockishness of the soul. One of the more severe indictments of BC in *The Dying of the Light* comes from a BC philosophy professor.

> Philosopher Joseph Flanagan, S.J., has observed the scene on the BC campus even more tartly. If he is correct, hopeful observers are whistling in the dark. Most BC students, he points out, are considerably formed and educated before ever coming to the university. They already have a philosophy and a theology, and there is nothing Catholic about either of them. The young students are bred into rampant individualism, which makes them largely immune to Christianity.

When my son decided to go to BC I was very pleased because I knew something about the resources of the place, and I thought I knew something about the tradition that formed it. I knew that Michael Buckley was there and a number of other household names in Catholic intellectual circles. I thought, yeah, faith and reason really can come together. Here is a place that says it can be both Catholic and a university. Here is a place that can do what Manhattan College was trying to do in the old days, but with a truly staggering affluence that provides resources they never dreamed of at Manhattan.

I remember being impressed at an open house at BC held for the admitted but still wavering, when several faculty members came to the podium to say that BC was a place where intellectual discourse and

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moral discourse could more easily and more fruitfully come together than at a secular university. They push that very hard, and it has a real appeal to parents (like myself) who might otherwise be a little queasy about acquiescing to the extortion of paying for top of the line private universities these days. (I might add that especially given its endowment, BC is much tighter than most when it comes to handing out financial aid. More than a few parents sell what they have and give to the rich that they may have their daughters and sons go to BC.) BC is very Catholic when it comes to projecting its image outward, not only to prospective parents, but to its alumni as well. But this outward-looking image has practically nothing to do with the inward-looking reality—the school that is actually encountered by its undergraduates. The only way these Catholic resources are available to undergraduates is if they happen to come there already committed to the Catholic tradition, and if they already know where to go to find that tradition's presence on campus. There is nothing in the requirements that demands that they find it. There is nothing in the BC curriculum that demands that they deal with it in a serious intellectual way. Students may well stumble into a pocket of the tradition by accident, but that is a long way from the propaganda that goes out to the parents and the alums. Suburban preppy jockishness of the soul is left to flourish uncontested.

What's more (and here I might be on shakier ground), my perception of BC is that moral decision making from the top is often little different from the poll-taking that drives so much of our national political process. Question: What is BC's stance with respect to the gay and lesbian student organization on campus? Answer: How will it play to the alumni and prospective (and present) parents? I read what I thought was a very decent op-ed piece by Fr. J. Donald Monan, S.J., on just this issue in the student newspaper early on in my son's time at BC. Fr. Monan invoked the Catholic tradition: he said that sanctioning the gay and lesbian student organization on campus could be construed as sanctioning a gay and lesbian lifestyle that was incompatible with the Catholic tradition as Boston College understood it. Then and now I think I could come up with some decent counterarguments. But I thought his position had much merit and I was impressed that here was an issue that could generate some serious moral discourse.

But my son was furious. Mostly because in his view Fr. Monan, by playing the trump card, the Catholic card, made it seem that the Catholic tradition was in fact the ultimate arbiter of what goes on at the college, when in fact it is used with the utmost selectivity and has no effect on so many other day-to-day activities of the college. BC plays the Catholic card when it is convenient or necessary to do so, mostly for keeping the image intact. The tradition, as Fr. Burtchaell has abundantly detailed, has nothing to do with whom they hire to teach their courses, it has nothing to do with what they actually require students to take, and it has a little but not really very much to do with what they offer. These are the factors that determine what a school will or will not be. What I came to see, much against my will I might add, was that BC and Fr. Monan, having forfeited the power to affect these institution-defining factors, have likewise forfeited the authority to speak about this one, or about the tradition at all. I'm willing to believe that Fr. Monan's stance was not intentionally based on PR. But that's the only way one could make sense out of it, whatever his intent.

"To those of you whose Greek is a little rusty, it means 'Ever to Excel.' It comes from Homer's *Iliad*, and is of course the motto of Boston College." Fr. J. Robert Barth, S.J., Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, has just read the ten lines or so that surround the motto in the original Greek as his introduction to the Honors Convocation during BC commencement weekend, 1998. Corny but effective. Then he reads the English translation. I am in the audience, a proud father. I am carried back about forty years to when I first heard these lines from Harry Oppido, S.J., at Brooklyn Prep, my junior year. J. Robert Barth is a smooth, witty, urbane, very bright Jesuit. (I was much taken four years earlier with his presentation of what Jesuits are all about at freshman orientation.) Harry Oppido was your gutsy gruff variety. Each well suited to his job. Certainly my Greek is a little rusty, but for a wonderful moment I was more than happy to forget about any gripes—mine or my son's—about BC and rejoice not only in my son's accomplishments but in the continuity of a shared tradition. It was as good as going to Ebbets Field with my father or to Wrigley Field with my children. Too bad I had to spoil it by reading *The Dying of the Light*. Most of the students on stage there, among the best and brightest at BC, had never read the *Iliad*, not in Greek, not in English—or at least they didn't read it at BC. Fr. Barth wasn't really speaking to them. My response was to get all nostalgic. Theirs was "whatever." We are all a little rusty in Greek these days.

BC keeps sending me all kinds of things. I still get the alumni magazine, even though I am not now and never have been a BC student, and even though they also send a separate copy to my son the alumnus. They send me notices of local alumni gatherings,

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again, addressed to me rather than my son. Most of all, they send me fundraising requests and have telemarketers call at regular intervals. Their new $400 million capital campaign is entitled "Ever to Excel." I confess that I like to read about what is going on there, even though it is filtered through a powerful PR machine. A lot of it seems very interesting. But when they talk about how far they have come since the provincial old days—and it is a constant theme—and how they are looking forward to catching up with Duke one of these days, I get a little sad and a little mad. FT

## Obedience, Again

*Genesis 22:1-3*

"Abraham,"
the voice had said,
"Give me your son—
your only son.
The one that you
love."

And there it is again,
that quick, unquestioning
obedience. Abraham
saddled his donkey and
split the wood.
He loaded up the cart and took
the fire, the knife, and
his son.

Abraham knew
that if Isaac died,
all the promises of God—
all the promises he
had staked his life on,
were false, were negated,
were made void.

God must have some
plan, Abraham thought—
some hidden trick
up his sleeve. For he
had been rebuked
before, and had come himself
to believe
the saying:

*Is anything*
*too difficult*
*for the Lord?*

**A. M. Nelson**

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# How Great Awakenings Happen

***Herbert Schlossberg***

Historians have identified three Great Awakenings—notable surges of religious vitality—in American history. The first occurred in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, the second in the opening decades of the nineteenth century, the third in the period following World War II. The term "Great Awakening" is loose and contested. Critics of the religious revival of the 1950s, for example—the names Peter Berger and Martin Marty come to mind—saw it as largely superficial and lacking in theological bite. Some observers of the current religious scene report glimpses of a Fourth Great Awakening, while others see only a secularist wasteland.

But whether or not current religious movements are powerful enough to make their way into the history books is of less moment than the question of whether they can have much of an effect on the way people actually live in their society. Does a renewal of religious conviction make much difference in the quality of life in a given society? Some of the most disquieting trends in America have taken place just when religious life, by some measures, has flourished. Widespread divorce, sexual antinomianism, rampant crime and bulging prisons, the belief amply demonstrated by polls that there is no such thing as a universal standard of moral behavior, and general boorishness and discourtesy—all coexist and grow along with the flourishing of religious activity. Moreover, some of the statistics show little difference in the indices of social pathology among people with a religious commitment compared to those without one. Is religion irrelevant to behavior, at least on the macro level? If so, contingently or necessarily irrelevant? Is it possible for private worship and associated activities to have much effect on the way society goes about its business? Or, to use the terminology associated with the Editor-in-Chief of this journal, must the public square remain forever naked despite the personal convictions of the inhabitants?

Gerhard Lenski, a sociologist of religion who has studied this issue, concludes that it is a mistake to measure the influence of religious associations on society exclusively by their success or failure in bringing about the institutional changes they advocate. He thinks that far more important than those organized campaigns are the "daily actions of thousands (or millions) of group members whose personalities have been influenced by their lifelong exposure" to religious influences. The Cambridge historian Herbert Butterfield once remarked that the importance of Christianity in the history of the West cannot really be understood very well by the historian who draws his information exclusively from documents. It lies rather in the constant preaching to the multitudes—often illiterate multitudes—of love and humility week after week, so that the way people feel, think, and behave is vastly different than it otherwise would have been. Butterfield concluded that this phenomenon has tended "greatly to alter the quality of life and the very texture of human history."

These cultural traits have powerful effects on the direction and force of a society. Who, for example, could calculate the magnitude of the effects of the replacement of *honor* as an ideal by *humility*? A slight that might be taken as sufficient to require a duel can be forgiven by a man who newly thinks such affronts are best met by love. There is also a strong cultural force in *repentance* as a theologically sanctioned and socially accepted requirement because it permits the

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turning away from destructive behavior to a new beginning. When such acts are multiplied by the millions it cannot help but bring about large-scale change, the sort that the historian can only despair of trying to track and quantify.

Is that just a theory, or can it be substantiated by concrete historical events? As a test case, consider the society that occupied England for most of the nineteenth century. The stereotypes have become so embedded in our consciousness that the mere utterance of "Victorian" is enough to evoke for most educated people disagreeable images: not only smoky factories and ugly buildings and furnishings, but a kind of pervasive moral squalor. Contempt drips from the pens of many analysts, both contemporary and modern. H. G. Wells, a product of the late Victorian period called it "slovenly and wasteful," with its contemptible dwellings, railways, furnishings, art, and literature. Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* showed the eminences to be ridiculous characters, not to be taken seriously, however seriously *they* seemed to take everything, especially themselves. A recent volume published by the Oxford University Press speaks of the "special place" that the Victorian age has in the present culture. "More than any other era it awakens in us our capacities to feel hostile toward a past way of life, to perceive the past as alien, unenlightened, and silly."

Examples could be multiplied, but they seem to consist of two main complaints: the Victorian age for most of these critics was too capitalist and too religious. The critics focus, often tendentiously, on individual biographies and on institutional, aesthetic, and economic issues, less on cultural manifestations—the moral and interpersonal factors that determine the quality of life—that to Lenski and Butterfield were the essence of the thing.

Rather than assessing the Victorian age backwards, try to approach it as it came into being—from the preceding centuries. The restoration of the English monarchy in 1660 brought with it revulsion against the excesses of the Puritan regime that had expired with Oliver Cromwell; but it also ushered in the very different excesses of the court of Charles II. The new king was concerned enough to be rid of Puritan influences that he had Cromwell's body ripped from the grave for public exhibition, but he was even more anxious to rid himself of the bother of having real, live Puritans, and he contrived to have them excluded from the ministry of the Church of England. After the next reign was brought to a hasty conclusion by the Glorious Revolution of 1688, William and Mary evicted from their livings staunch Anglo-Catholic clergymen who could not find it in their conscience to switch allegiances away from the deposed James II. Thus in the course of a generation both wings of the Church of England were lost. An historian reports the results:

> The "moderate," "reasonable" men, the time-servers, self-seekers, and pluralists—these all were left: but the wings of faith were gone. Had the "National" Church studied how best to extinguish all spiritual fire within the realm and to crush all crusading initiative, she could have devised no better plan than these two tragic expulsions.

The results were not long in coming, and analyses of the Anglican Church from the late seventeenth through much of the next century were mostly dismal. Perhaps the low point came in the 1730s, when Bishop Butler, in the preface to his famous *Analogy of Religion*, summed up the situation in this way:

> It is come, I know not how, to be taken for granted, by many persons, that Christianity is not so much as a subject of inquiry; but that it is, not at length, discovered to be fictitious. And accordingly they treat it, as if, in the present age, this were an agreed point among all people of discernment; and nothing remained, but to set it up as a principal subject of mirth and ridicule, as it were by way of reprisals, for its having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world.

That was the decade, however, in which John and Charles Wesley discovered what had eluded them until then: the transformative power of real Christian faith as opposed to the nominal adherence that seemed to be the destiny of much of the Georgian era. Out of that came the Methodist "classes"—small groups of believers meeting together for Bible study, discussion, prayer, and mutual encouragement and accountability. Along with the spread of these groups in myriad mining, fishing, and textile towns, scattered Anglican parishes came to life, when clergymen caught the meaning of the gospel in personal ways, experienced the conversion that came to be the hallmark of the evangelical movement, and preached Christian faith centered on the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Meanwhile the Dissenting churches, mainly the Baptist and Congregationalist, having descended into a funk similar to that of the Church of England, caught some of the same vision, and by the end of the century were for the most part firmly in the evangelical camp. If the state of technology had permitted it, a moving graphic of the growth of what the period

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called "experimental religion" would have shown widely dispersed dots appearing early in the century, gradually thickening on the map, until by the end of the century there were influential concentrations of evangelicals all over England. Societies to extend mission and to do good works sprang up all over the nation, and publications at all levels—from tracts intended for near-illiterates to collections of sermons to journals full of historical, political, and theological reasoning—began appearing, supplemented by newspapers and pamphlets.

A number of politically minded evangelicals under the leadership of William Wilberforce settled in the town of Clapham, south of London, and engaged in highly visible activism. To this group belongs much of the credit for the outlawing of the slave trade in 1807 after two decades of intense labor, and the total abolition of slavery throughout the British Empire in 1833 within a few days of Wilberforce's death—the end of a struggle that had lasted half a century. Among the other projects of the evangelicals was the enactment of factory and mine legislation to mitigate the harshness of life in the enterprises that came out of the industrial revolution, especially for women and children. Charitable work abounded both through societies and by individual initiative. It was also a great age of joyful and abundant giving for myriad good works. Some of the leaders of the Clapham group gave away more than half their incomes.

There were two later movements within the Church of England that broadened the stream of renewed Christianity begun by the evangelicals. At Rugby school the newly appointed headmaster Thomas Arnold determined to break with the brutality and paganism that marked the public schools in order to make the place a training ground for Christian gentlemen. Arnold had been much influenced by the theological and philosophical ideas of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and both Coleridge and Arnold are usually considered to be early leaders of the Broad Church. But in fact they were very different from the Broad Church figures who appeared on the scene after mid-century, clergymen like Benjamin Jowett of Oxford and Arthur Stanley, Dean of Westminster, whose connections with historic Christian thought seemed tenuous to many critics. Within a few years even Arnold's adversaries at Oxford were remarking on the serious Christians that were appearing at the universities from Rugby.

At Oxford itself, another group appeared in the early 1830s that called for a renewed appreciation for the historical nature of the Church, looking for inspiration to the theology and traditions of the early Christian centuries. Under the leadership of John Henry Newman and a few colleagues they issued "Tracts" that were actually sophisticated theological documents and called for an end to laxity and to the complacency of a Church willing to be dominated by political leaders, many of whom did not even pretend to be loyal to it. The movement lasted only for about seven years before its miscalculations destroyed its base at Oxford. But the "Tractarian" influence continued for decades in parishes all around England after the Oxford center had withered.

This brief sketch of the main elements of the religious revival leaves out the most important part of it. The ignorant became readers, writers, and leaders; the indigent began working and learning to excel at their work; housewives raised their children to be good family people, citizens, and neighbors; paupers and drunks began to earn a living, to save and invest and send their children to the universities and their grandchildren to the House of Commons. An often brutal society in which a woman walking alone on the street could expect to be at least verbally molested, in which the highways were unsafe for the unarmed, in which political corruption was common, in which sexual promiscuity was the norm, had by the early years of the new century become kinder, more loving, and—dare we say it?—more Christian.

Francis Place, a radical follower of Jeremy Bentham, rose out of poverty as a poor tailor to prosperity as a clothing merchant. He intensely disliked the growing practice of Christianity in the nation, but he noticed that along with it came a dramatic change in the way people were living. Looking back from his old age, he reflected on the difference between the present climate and when he was growing up in the 1780s:

> The circumstances which it will be seen I have mentioned relative to the ignorance, the immorality, the grossness, the obscenity, the drunkenness, the dirtiness and depravity of the middling and even of a large portion of the better sort of tradesmen, the artisans, and the journeymen tradesmen of London in the days of my youth, may excite a suspicion that the picture I have drawn is a caricature, the parts of which are out of keeping and have no symmetry as a whole.

When Alexis de Tocqueville arrived in the 1830s and observed the contrast that Place was talking about, he concluded that a great revolution had taken place in England and was still in process, but a revolution very different from those of his native France. He was particularly struck by the fact that the nobility of England were fully engaged in the reconstitution of

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religious and moral living that was taking over the country. Consider his account of a luncheon at the Earl of Radnor's house on May 27, 1835:

> Before coming to table Lord Radnor went to his study; Lady Radnor and his daughters went there too; after a moment eleven or twelve women and eight or ten men-servants came in. . . . These twenty people took their places round the room and knelt down looking towards the wall. Near the fireplace Lord and Lady Radnor and Lady Louisa knelt down too, and Lord Radnor read a prayer aloud, the servants giving the responses. This sort of little service lasted six or eight minutes, after which the male and female servants got up and went out in the same order to resume their work.

Of course, if that is all that had happened, just a little ceremony superimposed upon the same set of habits and relationships, it would have had little meaning. But Tocqueville observed that the culture had changed in profound ways that were symbolized by such ceremonies, and that is why he called the changes revolutionary. And Tocqueville described Lord Radnor, because of his political affiliations, as a *radical*. Everywhere Tocqueville traveled in England he saw this sort of devotional exercise, which he knew very well he would not have seen a half-century earlier.

It was a feature of this particular religious renewal that for the most part it rejected the view that serious Christianity concerned only the individual, not the society. Although most of the major actors in the drama believed in the doctrines of Adam Smith and therefore in the efficacy and justice of free markets (the doctrine was then called "political economy"), they were anything but individualists, a charge that has often been made. They banded together in huge numbers to form societies for helping the poor, evangelizing among an amazingly diverse array of groups, reforming morals, suppressing vice, improving the lot of prisoners, rescuing prostitutes from their economic distress and therefore their bondage, distributing religious literature, and promoting foreign missions.

The number and variety of these societies will probably never be exhaustively catalogued, nor any accurate estimate be made of the multitudes who supported them with their labor and money. By 1814 the Bible society alone had more than 100,000 members and unnumbered auxiliary organizations in almost every English county. A decade later there were more than 850 auxiliaries and 500 ladies' groups. In Manchester, Methodists formed the Strangers' Friend Society which, in an interesting twist on the meaning of charity, served the poor of any denomination *except* Methodists. Their motto was, "As we are, so shall the stranger be before the Lord."

A veritable army was marching through England doing good, or at least trying to do good. The church visitors were the unofficial and unpaid social workers of the nation. Many clergymen had what amounted to relief agencies in the parishes, with (mainly) women taking turns visiting the sick and needy. The big national societies had local chapters making a difference in the condition of neighborhoods, towns, and hamlets. Food, clothing, and medical care, training for productive work, rescue from prostitution, and education through the ragged schools were among the wares carried in the volunteers' kits.

As in the case of the national societies, most of this activity was conducted by evangelicals, but their example was taken up by others as well. Even after the young men at Clapham married and began raising families in the late 1790s, they continued to give away large sums of money for these purposes. Evangelicals of all economic classes emphasized the obligation to provide generously for the needy, and when the Tractarian movement metamorphosed into Ritualism, it took root mainly in poor parishes desperate for material as well as spiritual help. One angry woman, writing to the American Unitarian leader William Ellery Channing, complained that Hannah More, by writing *Cœlebs in Search of a Wife*, had made devoting two evenings a week to visiting the poor "a fashion and a rage." *Cœlebs* was published in 1809, and the first ladies' auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society appeared two years later, swelling the ranks of the visitors. This activity lasted decades and took innumerable forms. The Manchester Town Mission had fifty-two full-time workers visiting houses, urging attendance at public worship, and telling parents about the importance of securing an education for their children. Their operating funds came largely from voluntary donations from working class districts. Ellen Ranyard, an evangelical born in 1810, trained a corps of followers to help poor women manage their households, teaching them to cook, clean, and do needlework. She enrolled a group of poor women to train as itinerant nurses, and so increase the effectiveness of the other women making their rounds. She called these women "Bible nurses." Workers like Mrs. Ranyard became an example to others, and similar efforts were made by Quakers, Jews, Catholics, and others.

With the surge of piety and of literacy (largely through Sunday schools staffed by volunteer workers) the society was marked by an enormous appetite

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for Bible reading and Bible instruction. Informal study groups were active among churchmen and dissenters alike, and the printing presses were kept busy churning out Bibles and other literature for them. Autobiographical writings from the period suggest that after the Bible the two books having the most formative effect on Englishmen were *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Paradise Lost*, themselves based on the Bible. Collections of sermons were staples among the booksellers. Some of the literature was either given away or sold at heavily subsidized prices, but there was also a thriving market-driven trade in religious books.

The interdenominational Colportage Association recruited and trained sellers of Christian literature who saw this task as a calling fully as worthy to be followed as preaching and teaching. Free and subsidized tracts and colportage distribution still left an enormous unserved market—those who could not or would not pay for expensive books, but demanded more than tracts. The lending libraries filled the vacuum. Circulating libraries had existed from the latter half of the eighteenth century, but with a greatly expanded reading public they became much more important in the next century. Hannah More's *Cœlebs in Search of a Wife*, which went to thirty editions by the time of her death in 1834, was written explicitly for them.

C. E. Mudie (from 1842) and W. H. Smith (1858) became the largest distributors of books in the kingdom, and were in effect the arbiters of what the reading public would have available. Both were evangelicals. Mudie was a dissenter who occasionally preached and wrote hymns, and Smith considered becoming a clergyman. They judged books not only from a business perspective but also from the standpoint of their religious faith, avoiding what they considered indecency or blasphemy. Mudie affected the book purchasers' reading habits, as well as the borrowers', because of his influence over the decisions of publishers. Considering whether to publish a new novel, the publishing offices would resound with the crucial question: "What will Mudie say?"

If the religious revival turned ordinary people toward what seemed to be an older, or traditional notion of moral behavior, it also affected people who wished to reform radically some of the basic institutions of the society. The Chartist leaders who sought political reform to improve the conditions of workers included among their number preachers and also legions of Bible readers, and Chartist chapels dotted the English countryside in the 1840s. Tocqueville became acquainted with many of the radical leaders and noted how different they were from their French counterparts—much more respectful of property and of religion as well, including a great number of what he called "enthusiastic sectarians," which is to say evangelical dissenters.

The radical writer Harriet Martineau was more affected by the religious revival than she ever acknowledged. Her modern biographer believes that she did not realize how indebted her thinking was to the religious doctrines that she consciously rejected. Her intense interest in the Bible as a child developed into theological pursuits, and although they did not persist, the residue of the beliefs never left her, and her criticisms of the Church of England seem little different from the standard dissenting line. An old history of socialism says that in order to understand the radical William Godwin (1756-1836) "it must always be borne in mind that he was essentially a Calvinist preacher. His materialism is inverted Calvinist theology." That is to say, the radical content was transmitted with the moral intensity of the evangelical environment. Robert Taylor, a notorious former clergyman, delivered spell-binding radical sermons at the Blackfriars Rotunda in London, a center of militant causes. Professing himself to be an unbeliever, he preached his gospel with all the zest and emotional power of the most fervid evangelical preacher in the kingdom. He was not alone.

The pre-Victorian period we have been considering was a remarkable one because it seemed to belie the oft-repeated historicist admonition that we cannot turn back the clock. We hear this mainly from progressives who decry the resisting of trends that seem to be dominant, and who wish to continue what has been set in motion. But the impulse behind the remark is a conservative one; it wishes to preserve the trend against those who would change it. People who were setting the new agenda in the eighteenth century ended up creating a very different society in the nineteenth. Wesley and Whitefield, Venn of Huddersfield and Walker of Truro, were conscious of recreating in tiny villages or in isolated parishes the promise of a gospel that had atrophied from neglect and self-interest. As the movement spread, it coalesced around academic leaders in Cambridge and then political leaders in Clapham; it spawned publications and societies almost beyond numbering; it attracted the allegiance of many millions of people who accepted its claims upon them.

And then it attracted the attention of people who were critical of its shortcomings, who trained a new generation in Rugby and other public schools, in Oxford, and from there a thousand parishes. It fragmented into competing and often antagonistic schools among both Anglicans and Dissenters, but the fragments were sparks, setting fires as they were

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scattered throughout the land. There were many differences among the fragments, but they were united on a few main principles. They were one in their rejection of the laxity and shallowness that dominated eighteenth-century English religion and society, the Christ-less conjunction of moralism with a deep and pervasive immorality. They all sought the recovery of the gospel that had animated the early Church, and they all believed in the seriousness of religious profession and the conduct that flowed from it.

In this remarkable renewal of vital Christianity, for all the limitations of its participants and consequent shortcomings of the movement, the tincture of vital religion spread throughout the society, giving to it the coloration of a revived Christianity. This new society, a product of a silent revolution from within its own resources, its own history and traditions, was far from perfect, but it freed the slaves, taught the ignorant, brought spiritual light where there was darkness, turned the drunk and indigent into useful citizens and effective parents, and ameliorated the harsh conditions brought about by industrialization, internal migration, and rapid population growth. It was a revolution that succeeded in making almost all things better. There are not many like that.

The lamentations about contemporary American society—indeed of Western societies in general—seem little different from those heard in the eighteenth century and the early years of the nineteenth. The empty religiosity coexisting with open contempt for the Christian heritage of the nation, the widespread hypocrisy, the general lawlessness, and the political corruption were similar. Change the time-specific terminology and examples in William Wilberforce's *Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians* (1797) and you might think it was written two centuries later.

Yet there seemed to be remarkably little hand-wringing in Wilberforce and his merry band of anti-slavers. Full of hope, they did their duty to God and men as they were given light, braved the setbacks, and did not seem amazed at their great successes. It was as if they believed that God was ultimately in charge and they had only to be faithful to their charges. There is no reason that that experience could not be repeated today, despite the widespread pessimism. After all, it was only two years from the time Bishop Butler announced to the world that Great Britain had decided that Christianity was fictitious that John Wesley found spiritual life in Christ and the renewal of the entire society began its course. FT

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# Books In Review

**Trinity and Truth.** By Bruce D. Marshall. *Cambridge University Press. 287 pp. $64.95 cloth, $22.95 paper.*

***Reviewed by* R. R. Reno**

There is a danger in reviewing books written by theologians one knows, respects, and argues with on a regular basis. Arguments that might otherwise appear compressed and clipped come across as economical and effective. Digressions seem suggestive rather than distracting. Implicit structural design appears obvious rather than obscure. Unarticulated assumptions and unspoken consequences are evident. Insights overwhelm inadequacies, and one is too grateful for the overall edifying effect to complain about any particular defects. While reading Bruce Marshall's new book, *Trinity and Truth*, all these things happened to me. As a result, my response is to commend: this is a very important, challenging, and powerful book that provides both insight into and a measure of guidance out of the crisis of Christian theology in the West.

Marshall's central polemical claim is that much of modern theology has taken an incoherent approach to the justification of Christian beliefs. We cannot avoid observing that Christian faith entails holding beliefs about Jesus, the Father who sent him, and the Spirit who bears witness. These beliefs are "central" or "essential" in a descriptive sense. If no one believes such things, then there are no Christians. If we wish to be Christian, then we must hold these central trinitarian beliefs as *epistemically primary* with respect to other beliefs. That is to say, "the Church will decide about the truth of other beliefs by seeing how well they fit, or cohere, with the beliefs which constitute its identification of the triune God."

As Marshall rightly observes, modern theology assumes that such a claim "can only make the conflict between modernity and Christian belief worse." If, it is feared, theologians insist on the trinitarian identification of God as epistemically primary, Christianity will consign itself to an intellectual ghetto, driving theology even farther from mainstream thought and compromising the possibility that theology might be a respected intellectual practice in the university. In reaction to this prospect, modern theologians try to avoid basing their theological arguments on distinctively Christian claims about Jesus, the Father, and the Spirit.

Worried about intellectual respectability, theology seeks some measure by which to decide whether its claims are true or false, basically plausible or not, and so on. Marshall identifies three epistemological standards that Christian theologians use to avoid the trinitarian standard. The first is an interiority thesis, that Christian beliefs about the triune God "are justified to the extent that they adequately express certain inner experiences." Readers familiar with George Lindbeck's postliberal project will recognize this as the "experiential-expressivist" approach to religious truth. The second thesis is foundationalist. Here, justified Christian beliefs are "tied in virtue of their meaning to self-evident or incorrigible data." This parallels, roughly, the "propositionalist" approach. To these two theses Marshall adds a third, the epistemic dependence thesis, "according to which the primary criteria for deciding about the truth of Christian beliefs, at least in part and perhaps in whole, must not themselves be distinctively Christian."

Theologians, like most intellectuals, tend to be influenced as much by fashionable trends as by arguments themselves. By and large, both the interiority and foundationalist theses have little cultural currency at present. Nobody wants to be a foundationalist these days, and the popularity of the slogan "there is no uninterpreted experience" deters theologians from adopting the interiority thesis. The dependence thesis, however, goes pretty much unchallenged. It makes the apparently modest and minimal claim that a Christian is not justified in believing what he does unless he submits his belief, at least in part, to the demands of contemporary intellectual life.

This sounds perfectly reasonable, but it is easier said than done. Christians say that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Modern natural science and social science advance no teaching about the identity of God. How, then, is one to establish the relationships of identity and material noncontradiction necessary to demonstrate that one's faith is "intellectually honest"? How can the *set x* of Christian beliefs be brought into a logically significant relation to *set y* of putatively modern beliefs?

Marshall shows how, from Schleiermacher to Bultmann and from Rahner to Tracy, modern theology has pursued this goal by adjusting the meaning of Christian beliefs, so that *set x* and *set y* are interpreted toward a common point of contact. However widespread these efforts might be, far from making Christianity more philosophically respectable, a "hermeneutical" approach produces hopeless confusions. From Gottlob Frege to Donald Davidson, modern philosophers have argued that one cannot discern the meaning of what people say without deciding about the truth of what is being said. As

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Marshall puts the matter, paraphrasing Frege, "the meaning of a sentence is, or is given by, its truth conditions." We decide what a statement means only insofar as we have clearly formulated notions about how it might be true.

Marshall develops and expands this contemporary reflection on the relation between meaning and truth, and in so doing he casts serious doubt on the efficacy of the standard procedures of modern theology. If meaning depends upon truth conditions, and if Christian beliefs are held, in faith and worship, as epistemically primary, then any attempt to make the justification (truth conditions) of Christian beliefs dependent upon non-Christian beliefs will change their meaning. As a consequence, quintessential modern theologians such as Rudolf Bultmann cannot show that Christian faith is "intellectually responsible." They can only show that a certain "idea of Christianity," mediated by Christian language and practice, is "intellectually responsible."

Marshall identifies Bultmann's procedure very clearly. To say "Jesus rose from the dead" is not intellectually responsible, but the gnomic utterance that "the kerygmatic proclamation of Jesus' resurrection mediates God's definitive promise of salvation in the cross and makes possible authentic existence" is just the sort of thing that "modern man" can affirm (or so Bultmann claims). Christianity comes out true, but at the cost of substituting a new, "kerygmatic" meaning for the plain sense of Christian belief.

DRAWING ON Donald Davidson's reflections on truth and interpretation, Marshall shows how this revisionist position is untenable. To the extent that modern theologians must ascribe new meaning to particular Christian beliefs so that they will come out true within the "modern worldview," they "systematically increase the likelihood that these interpretations will be implausible," not only for distinctive Christian beliefs, but for all beliefs. In other words, for all their purported "hermeneutical" sensitivity, modern theologies that subscribe to the dependence thesis produce extraordinarily dubious interpretations of almost every belief they encounter.

This tendency is evident. Consider Karl Rahner's influential *Foundations of the Christian Faith.* Rahner interprets the meaning of "the evolutionary worldview" as "the basic tendency of matter to discover itself in spirit through self-transcendence." The proper conceptual meaning of the Christian belief that Jesus rose from the dead is that God accepts and affirms the definitive fulfillment of human self-transcendence in freedom. Thus interpreted, both meanings may be correlated, and Rahner feels confident that he has shown how the modern believer can affirm the truth of the modern scientific worldview and the historic commitments of faith. But this affirmation is possible only if one adopts the radically implausible assumption that nearly all the sentences used by both scientists and Christians do not mean what we ordinarily think they mean. Thus, the dependence thesis in theology is not only repugnant to neo-Barthians eager to affirm the "plain sense" of Christian language, it is also repugnant to anyone who thinks that most people say what they mean to say most of the time.

I cannot overstate the force of this *reductio ad absurdum* of the dependence thesis. Marshall is not slapping the wrists of modern theologians for failing to read and bow before the latest theories of analytic philosophy regarding justification, interpretation, and truth. He is advancing argu-


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ments, many motivated and guided by contemporary analytic philosophy, to show that successful execution of the dependence thesis entails radically implausible claims about what people mean when they speak and act, whether as Christians or as "modern men." The consequences are devastating. Far from making theology more intellectually respectable, the dependence thesis makes theology utterly implausible, not only as an account of what Christians actually believe, but also as an account of the meaning and import of any beliefs, Christian or non-Christian. No wonder modern theology is now peripheral to contemporary intellectual life.

Since the dependence thesis descends into absurdity, Marshall observes that Christian theologians have no choice but to treat the triune identification of God in Christian language and practice as epistemically primary—or reject these central Christian beliefs as false and get on with finding another line of work. This is not "sectarian" or "fideistic," he argues, but necessary. To think otherwise one must first make assumptions as illogical as the dependence thesis. Thus, none of the usual assumptions of modern theology about the "real intellectual standards" for theology and the dread dangers of mere "dogmatic thinking" turn out to be tenable on Marshall's analysis.

Although it is illuminating and powerful, this part of Marshall's book raises important and complicated questions. For example, Christian figural reading of the Old Testament was often attacked as an abuse of the plain sense meaning of the text, and for reasons not dissimilar to Marshall's attack upon the meaning-mongering of modern theology. One positively begs for guidance in understanding how this traditional biblical hermeneutic is related, either positively or negatively, to the incoherence of modern theology and its insouciant assumptions about meaning. Furthermore, the Neoplatonism favored by the Fathers has important family connections to the post-Kantian idealism that, in one form or another, dominates the approach and vocabulary of modern theology. Again, to the extent that this modern approach and its characteristic assumptions must be rejected, one wishes for instruction in reading the Fathers and properly understanding their use of premodern forms of philosophical idealism.

Marshall, however, does not ask or answer these questions, but presses on toward the question of what truth is. Our theological reflection, however clear-minded about the epistemic primacy of Christian beliefs, is a search for truth. Marshall thus concludes the book with an inquiry into the way in which this search is properly trinitarian.

Marshall offers an account of the Tarski-Davidson (T-D) concept of truth—named after Donald Davidson and mathematician and logician Alfred Tarski—that he thinks can serve as a proper handmaiden to theology. This view is most controversial in its simplicity: the concept of truth should be understood as the ability of sentences to bear truth. Marshall offers reasons for thinking that this is the most plausible way to think about what it means for a sentence to be true (warning: this can get somewhat technical), and in his final chapter begins to show how the T-D position can provide the basis for a Christian account of the concept of truth.

It might seem a stretch to move from the view that sentences bear truth to the idea that truth is identified with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But if Jesus is to be "all truth," then there must be some relation between the natural sense of truth (as explicated in the T-D position) and the supernatural (as revealed in Scripture). Marshall explains this


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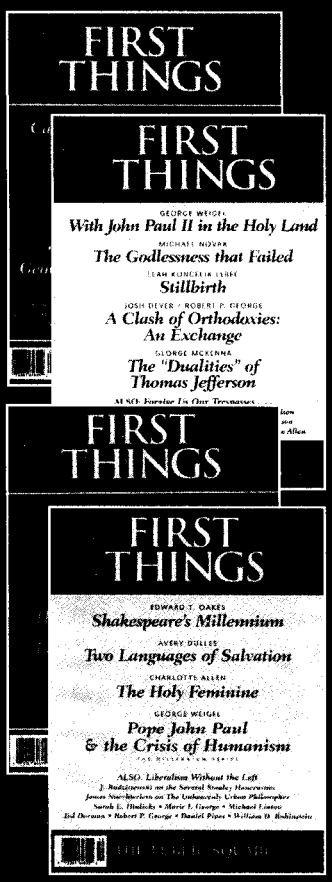


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connection by delving into the classical trinitarian distinctions: between the unity of divine action and the differentiation of divine roles, between the immanent and economic Trinity, as well as between supernatural knowledge of the Trinity and natural knowledge of creatures.

This trinitarian reflection is instructive. Too many theologians put trinitarian theology to nontheological uses: they try to "discover meaning" from trinitarian language, or to "raise up" Christian beliefs to the conceptual level, or to show how friendship or equality or mutuality or reciprocity or other leading ideas are "mediated" by trinitarian language. Marshall, on the other hand, pays attention to what Christians say they believe, treats these beliefs as fundamental, and builds upon them using the rigorous and cogent T-D account of truth. As a consequence, Marshall's final chapter yields an intellectually disciplined meditation upon the truth of Christian proclamation that depends upon defeasible inferences based upon the plain sense meaning of sentences that Christians actually use.

This approach makes *Trinity and Truth* more than a well-wrought postliberal tract. The concluding chapters differ from the usual neo-Barthian tut-tutting about the terrible errors and untenable assumptions of modern theology. Unlike Barthian forms of modernism, Marshall does not seek to turn "revelation" inside out as the sole source rather than the governing center of true beliefs. Instead, for Marshall, theologians must make informed judgments about which philosophical beliefs are commended by argument. As Marshall rightly notes, only by beginning with truth can theology "radically discipline and change" philosophical claims with central Christian mysteries. After all, disciplining philosophical truth requires more than rejecting its errors and moving on. Theology, for Marshall, must cultivate and nurture philosophical discernment so that, under the lordship of Christ, our reflection might yield deeper and transfigured truths.

Marshall's book exemplifies the classical vocation of faith seeking understanding. Such a vocation puts Christian belief first. This requires the humility to submit one's best ideas to the plain meaning of what is believed and said in worship, and the commitment to investigate what follows when one's Christian beliefs exert a proper primacy over other beliefs one has good reasons for holding as true. This approach may strike some as a return to "scholasticism," and others as an advance beyond "postliberalism." The theological taxonomists can decide. But of one thing I am certain: neither in form or content can such a theology be called modern.

# Singer in the Rain

**A Darwinian Left: Politics, Evolution, and Cooperation.** By Peter Singer. *Yale University Press. 64 pp. $9.95.*

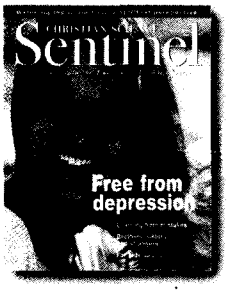
***Reviewed by*** **Nancy Pearcey**

Back when E. O. Wilson first promoted his newly hatched theory of sociobiology, protesters doused him with a pitcher of water. Since then, sociobiology has come a long way, baby. Dolled up with fancy new monikers like "evolutionary psychology," it now saunters boldly into the academy claiming to be not only a valid field of investigation but much

Nancy Pearcey *is a fellow of the Discovery Institute's Center for the Renewal of Science and Culture and managing editor of the journal* Origins and Design. *She is coauthor (with Charles Colson) of* How Now Shall We Live?

"No problem can withstand the assault of sustained thinking"

—Voltaire

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more—a comprehensive synthesis of biology and philosophy, a guide to ethics and policy. Many scholars are now scrambling for the lady's hand, eager to claim her for their own philosophical programs.

Yet evolutionary psychology turns out to be disturbingly fickle, capable of supporting a wide range of ethical conclusions. For even if we grant that certain human behaviors have an evolutionary origin, that does not tell us *which* behaviors are normative or morally good. In his latest book, *A Darwinian Left*, Peter Singer joins the line of suitors, hoping to win over evolutionary psychology to his particular liberal agenda. Whether he succeeds is another matter.

Sociobiology originally raised hackles, Singer explains in an interview, because it was regarded as a revival of "nasty, right-wing biological determinism"—a revival, that is, of Social Darwinism, which has long harnessed the idea of the survival of the fittest to notions of progress through competition and the ruthless pursuit of self-interest. In evolutionary psychology, the selfish individual has merely been replaced by the selfish gene.

Interestingly, Singer does not deny this unpleasant view of human nature; indeed, he urges the left to face up to its truth. Leftist utopianism is based on the assumption of the malleability of human nature, leading to dreams of "the Perfectibility of Man." Nor are these merely idle dreams—they have inspired attempts to remake society and human nature, issuing in the totalitarian state.

But Darwinism implies that human nature is not completely malleable, Singer argues: the left must "face the fact that we are evolved animals, and that we bear the evidence of our inheritance, not only in our anatomy and our DNA, but in our behavior too." Thus humans possess "evolved dispositions"—for example, to act from self-interest and to form hierarchical social arrangements—and political thinkers need to take these dispositions into account. Not that Singer thinks leftists should give up their ideal of, say, an egalitarian society; but they should understand that it "is not going to be nearly as easy as revolutionaries usually imagine."

Yet this dark view of human nature is only half the picture, Singer insists. Recent Darwinians have shown that humans are hard-wired by natural selection for cooperative as well as competitive behavior, even for altruism. Singer cites now-familiar studies of kin altruism, where apparently sacrificial behavior on the part of a mother for her child is "explained" as a strategy for passing on her genes. He also describes game theory experiments showing that cooperative strategies—tit for tat—work best in getting what we want. Of course, neither of these examples represents altruism in the ordinary sense; they are merely extended forms of self-interest. Nevertheless, they are enough to satisfy Singer that Darwinism may now be harnessed to support the left's vision of a more cooperative society.

DOES SINGER ultimately succeed in crafting a Darwinian left? Not exactly. To begin with, for all his eagerness to be identified as a man of the left, Singer shows a cavalier disregard for the concerns of real leftists. Historically, the left focused on the ownership of the means of production; in today's "identity politics," the enemy is no longer capitalism but racism, sexism, and homophobia. Yet Singer says nothing about any of these; instead he offers a definition of the left so broad as to be meaningless. "[T]he core of the left is a set of values," he writes. A person of the left sees "the vast quantity of pain and suffering that exists in the universe" and wants "to do something to reduce it." Under this expansive definition, everyone who favors social amelioration—including, no doubt, everyone reading this review—is a leftist.

Clearly, Singer is just not all that interested in leftist political theory. Neither is he very interested in evolutionary psychology, it turns out. For all his eagerness to woo Darwinism away from the right, he recognizes that evolution cannot provide a basis for the "set of values" he wants to

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defend. Earlier sociobiologists like Wilson had hoped that evolution would reveal "ethical premises inherent in man's biological nature," challenging "the traditional belief that we cannot deduce values from facts." But those earlier hopes have been chastened, and today most proponents of evolutionary psychology vigorously disavow the naturalistic fallacy of seeking to derive "ought" from "is."

"Evolution carries no moral loading, it just happens," Singer writes. "Even an evolved disposition . . . cannot serve as the premise of an argument that tells us, without further ethical input, what we ought to do." Darwinism tells us merely what barriers exist in human nature to enacting a given political agenda, allowing us to better assess costs and benefits; it does not provide a justification for values. And "since to be of the left is to hold certain values," Singer writes, "Darwin's theory has nothing to do with whether one is left or right."

So why did he write the book, one wonders. It turns out that the most important function Darwinism performs for Singer is to debunk certain pre-Darwinian ideas: to wit, the biblical account of human origins and the ethic that goes along with it—especially the idea that humans are unique and ought to be treated differently from nonhumans. That view has been "thoroughly refuted by evolution," Singer asserts. By positing an unbroken historical continuum from animals to humans, "Darwinian thinking provided the basis for a revolution in our attitudes to nonhuman animals." Thus a Darwinian left would "work towards a higher moral status for nonhuman animals, and a less anthropocentric view of our dominance over nature." Here we recognize Singer's familiar profile as a supporter of animal rights (and of euthanasia and infanticide—for humans at least). And here is also where his real interest lies: in supporting an ethic of "impartial concern" for all sentient beings.

But how to support such an ethic? Having ardently courted evolutionary psychology through most of the book, in the final pages Singer drops it suddenly like an old mistress when true love comes along. And true love for Singer is . . . reason. In some unexplained way, natural selection has made us "reasoning beings," which enables us to transcend the impulses instilled by natural selection. Through reason we are able to develop genuine altruism, not merely kin altruism or enlightened self-


Christianity in Jewish Terms

Edited by
Tikva Frymer-Kensky,
David Novak,
Peter Ochs,
David Sandmel,
and Michael Signer

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Contributors: Tikva Frymer-Kensky, David Novak, Peter Ochs, David Sandmel, Michael Signer, Robert Chazan, Irving Greenberg, Christopher Leighton, David Ellenson, David Tracy, Hindy Najman, George Lindbeck, Elliot Dorff, Stanley Hauerwas, Yitz Greenberg, Kendell Soulen, Larry Hoffman, Ruth Langer, Robert Wilken, Leora Batnitsky, Robert Gibbs, John Cavadini, Elliot Wolfson, Randi Rashkover, Susan Ross, Menahem Kellner, Nancy Fuchs-Kraemer, Clark Williamson, Steven Kepnes, Laurie Zoloth, Miroslav Volf, David Blumenthal, William Schweiker

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interest. "We do not know," Singer writes wistfully, "to what extent our capacity to reason can . . . take us beyond the conventional Darwinian constraints on the degree of altruism that a society may be able to foster."

In other words, Darwinian evolution has produced a capacity—reason—that transcends Darwinian evolution. Singer hopes that the insights of reason may eventually "overcome the pull of other elements in our evolved nature" until we embrace "the idea of an impartial concern for all of our fellow humans, or, better still, for all sentient beings."

SINGER DOESN'T account for this novel capacity that frees us to act against our evolved nature—he simply pulls it out of a hat. Quoting arch-Darwinian Richard Dawkins, he holds out the prospect of "deliberately cultivating and nurturing pure, disinterested altruism—something that has no place in nature, something that has never existed before in the whole history of the world." In other words, reason is presented as a mysterious capacity capable of creating something de novo, something that has never existed before—one might even say ex nihilo. With this godlike power, we can rise above our evolutionary origins. "Although 'we are built as gene machines,'" he says, quoting Dawkins again, "'we have the power to turn against our creators.'"

The eloquence of Singer's language signals that here we have tapped his most ardent beliefs. This is not Singer the "thinking machine," as he has been labeled for his cool, calculating utilitarianism regarding euthanasia and infanticide. No, this is Singer the true believer. Here reason is treated as far more than a utilitarian instrument. It is nothing less than the means of achieving freedom—metaphysical and moral freedom. Singer alludes to Hegel, who "portrayed the culmination of history as a state of Absolute Knowledge, in which Mind knows itself for what it is, and hence achieves its own freedom." We don't have to buy Hegel's metaphysics to see that "something similar really has happened in the last fifty years," Singer enthuses: "For the first time since life emerged from the primeval soup, there are beings who understand how they have come to be what they are." In short, through scientific rationality, Hegel's vision of absolute freedom now shows promise of realization: "In a more distant future that we can still barely glimpse, [scientific knowledge] may turn out to be the prerequisite for a new kind of freedom."

This is an astonishing finale to a book that is otherwise sober and restrained. Singer prides himself on being a realist, offering "a sharply deflated vision of the left, its utopian ideas replaced by a coolly realistic view of what can be achieved." That may be true when he describes the biological constraints on human possibilities. But when he promises "a new kind of freedom" from those same biological constraints, he becomes a flaming utopian, as passionate as any revolutionary.

IN THE END, Singer's hope of giving the left a solid basis in science fails—not merely because of ongoing debates over whether Darwinism really explains human behavior but because Darwinism is ultimately irrelevant to his moral vision. Darwinism has its uses in debunking Christian theology, but when it comes to constructing his own ethic, Singer makes a leap of faith to a mystical notion of reason that transcends Darwinian biology.

Needless to say, such a leap renders Singer's position hopelessly self-contradictory. For the same Darwinian premise that undercuts morality by rendering all behavior merely survival strategies, also undercuts epistemology by rendering the ideas in our minds likewise merely survival strategies. As Richard Rorty has written, "keeping faith with Darwin" means understanding that the human species is not oriented "toward Truth," but only "toward its own increased prosperity." Truth claims are just tools to "help us get what we want." Or as Patricia Churchland puts it, an improvement in an organism's cognitive faculties will be selected for only if it "enhances the organism's chances of survival. Truth, whatever that is, definitely takes the hindmost."

Darwin himself wrestled repeatedly with the skeptical consequences of his theory. Just one example: "With me," he wrote, "the horrid doubt always arises whether the convictions of man's mind, which has been developed from the mind of the lower animals, are of any value or at all trustworthy." (Significantly, Darwin always expressed this "horrid doubt" after admitting an insistent

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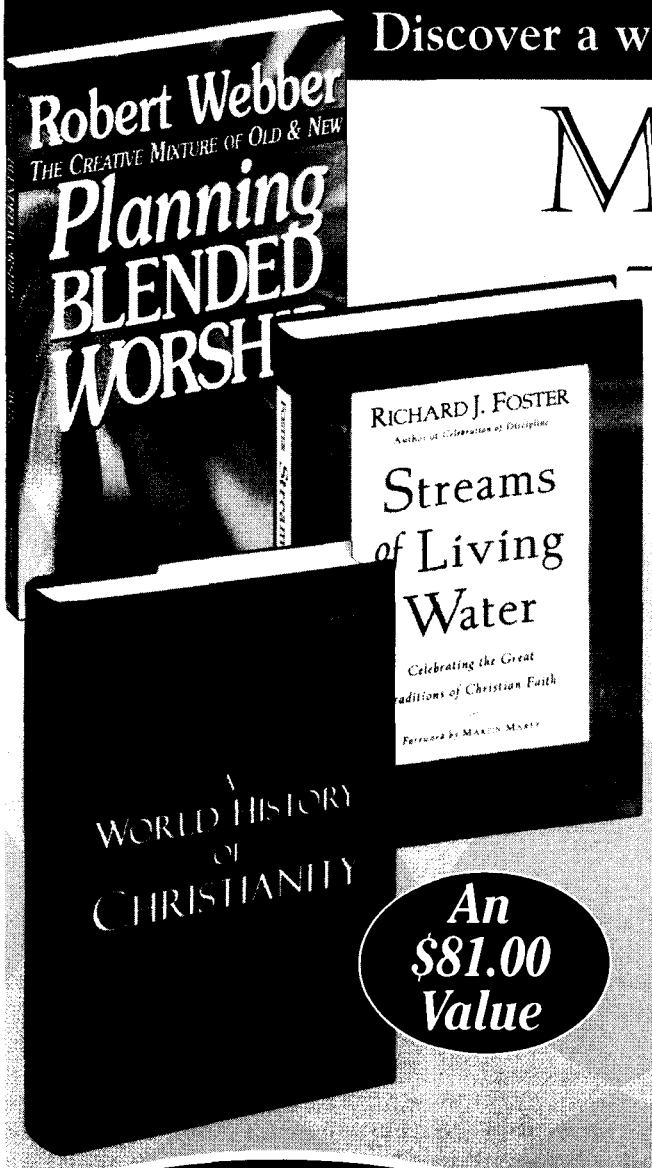


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"inward conviction" that the universe is not the result of chance after all, but requires an intelligent Mind, a First Cause. In other words, he applied his skepticism selectively: when reason led to a theistic conclusion, he argued that evolution discredits reason. But since reason was also the means by which he constructed his own theory, he was cutting off the branch he was sitting on.)

SIMILAR SELF-CONTRADICTIONS are endemic in the literature on evolutionary psychology. A prime example is *The Moral Animal*, where author Robert Wright spends hundreds of pages describing human beings as "robots," "puppets," "machines," and "Swiss watches" programmed by natural selection. He insists that "biochemistry governs all" and that free will is sheer illusion. He unmasks our noblest moral impulses as survival "stratagems of the genes," as mere devices "switched on and off in keeping with self-interest." But then, in a grand leap of faith, Wright insists that we are now free to choose our moral ideals, and he urges us to practice "brotherly love" and "boundless empathy."

This persistent inner contradiction stems from the fact that evolutionary psychology is essentially a search for a secular morality. Darwinism cut the modern world loose from religious traditions and systems of meaning; the result is a culture adrift in a sea of relativism. Now Darwinism is itself being plumbed as a source of meaning, a cosmic guide for the problems of living. Yet the Darwinist view of human nature is so negative, so counter to traditional notions of human dignity, morality, and reason (not to mention common sense), that there is an almost irresistible impulse to take a leap of faith back to those traditional notions, no matter how unsupported by the theory. For who can live with a theory that tells us that "ethics is illusory," and that "morality is merely an adaptation put in place to further our reproductive ends," in the words of Michael Ruse and E. O. Wilson? Who can live with a theory that tells us that if "natural selection is both sufficient and true, it is impossible for a genuinely disinterested or 'altruistic' behavior pattern to evolve," in the words of M. T. Ghiselin?

Peter Singer, for one, cannot. One solution would have been to revive the traditional theism that made disinterested altruism a moral ideal in the first place (albeit with a distinction between humans and


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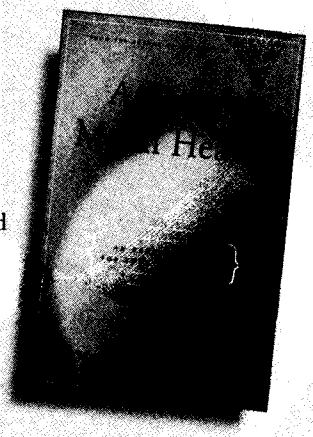

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other "sentient beings"). Instead, he tries to graft that moral ideal onto the Darwinian tree. The graft will not take, and the result is a fatal incoherence.

## *Scriptura* without Solace

**An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States, 1777-1880.** By Paul C. Gutjahr. *Stanford University Press. 256 pp. $39.50.*

**In Discordance with the Scriptures: American Protestant Battles over Translating the Bible.** By Peter J. Thuesen. *Oxford University Press. 238 pp. $27.50.*

***Reviewed by* D. G. Hart**

Readers of popular evangelical magazines could plausibly conclude that the historic Protestant conception of the authority and infallibility of the Bible is alive and well. Advertisements for Bibles in various translations and with differing annotations, along with commentaries, software programs, reference works, devotionals, and paraphernalia, testify to Protestantism's continuing allegiance to Scripture as the only source of divine guidance. Today's Bible industry would also appear to vindicate the Protestant Reformers' efforts to translate the word of God into the vernacular and make it available to a broad audience of lay believers. Testimonies to the Bible's uniqueness and popularity come in all forms, from the advertisement for a new translation that required "ninety leading Bible scholars laboring prayerfully for seven years to assure the accuracy and readability" of Scripture, to General George F. Patton's habit of reading the book "every goddamned day."

These two books challenge the apparent success of the Bible industry in America. Indeed, as Paul Gutjahr and Peter Thuesen show, scholarly criticism is just the beginning of Protestant worries when it comes to defending the Bible as the sole authority for faith and practice. As a physical object, the Bible is never only the word of God, but comes mediated through the human hands of publishers, translators, editors, and booksellers. For this reason, efforts to prevent sinful humans from tampering with the pristine character of holy writ are futile. In the history of Bible publishing and translation, the Creator's word ends up depending on the words, hands, strength, and especially money of His creatures.

*An American Bible* is a particularly effective account of how matters as seemingly innocuous as bindings, covers, illustrations, and maps have had the ironic consequence of redirecting Protestant reverence for Scripture. Gutjahr starts by demonstrating that the Bible, as a book, created an inherently contradictory dynamic within the marketplace of American publishing. For instance, the American Bible Society's laudable desire to furnish every home with a Bible established the book as the most accessible and influential among nineteenth-century readers. But the widespread availability of the good book required changes in print and distribution that made it increasingly cheap to produce and set in motion a competition among printers and publishers for the largest market. And one of the cultural contradictions that attended this form of capitalism was that an affordable Bible required publishers to look for packaging that would attract buyers. With the advent of

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niche marketing came Bibles designed for display in the parlor, Bibles with more expensive bindings, Bibles with better illustrations, Bibles with more comments, and Bibles with superior translations. This story of the Bible's publishing, packaging, and marketing allows Gutjahr to make the important point that the materiality of the book itself may have had the unintended effect of distracting readers from the Bible's very words.

Likewise, the Protestant desire to make the Bible influential in American public life resulted in a series of skirmishes for the soul of the nation's public schools. Most of what Gutjahr presents here concerning the nineteenth-century school wars is familiar terrain. Nevertheless, his telling of this story brilliantly reinforces his larger point about the way that the promotion of the Bible ended up undermining the book's pious advocates. In this particular case, not only did the debates about Bible reading in public schools show the growing numerical and political influence of Roman Catholicism in the United States, but the court battles that ensued diminished the Bible's status in the schools' curricula. As Gutjahr puts it, "a text that had provided the nation with a source of shared cultural memory and language for nearly two centuries would find itself increasingly 'ghetto-ized' among specific, more Protestant segments of the nation's population."

IF *An American Bible* shows the unintended mess that Protestants made of the Bible's significance, *In Discordance with the Scriptures* details the ways that Protestant churchmen over the last 125 years have tried to put the genie of a vernacular Bible back in the bottle of one version that all Protestants would use. (By 1880, according to Gutjahr's count, Americans had nearly two thousand different editions of the Bible from which to choose.) The most notable results of the search for a commonly accepted English version of the Bible that would supersede the King James Version were the Revised Version (1881 for the New Testament; 1885 for the Old Testament) and the Revised Standard Version (1952). Thuesen's narrative explores more than these two versions, covering English Bible translations from William Tyndale to the New International, but the heart of his story is the effort by American Protestants to arrive at a definitive version.

Neither the Revised Version nor the Revised Standard Version suc-


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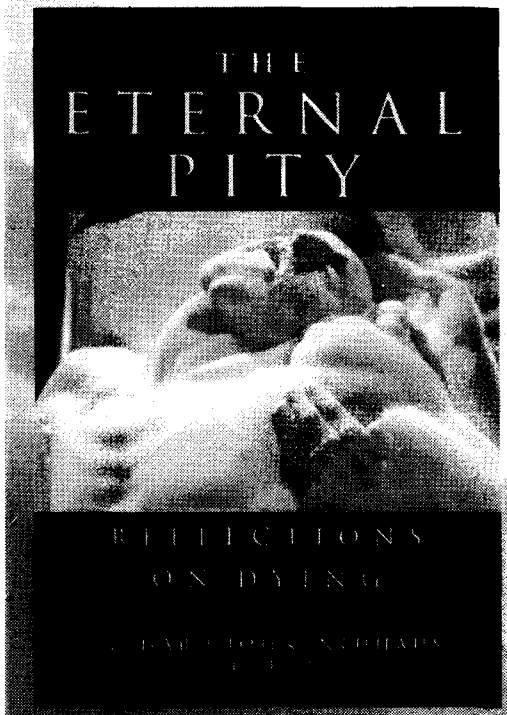


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ceeded in becoming the translation used by all American Protestants. Part of the reason for this failure was the rift that developed between mainline and evangelical Protestants over the last 125 years. But just as important—and this is the most significant point in Thuesen's argument—is the legacy of Protestantism's teaching on *sola scriptura*. In the late nineteenth century the contributors to the Revised Version believed that textual criticism could be used to arrive at the best translation. But the study of manuscripts inevitably raised questions about the history recorded in the text and so had the potential for creating doubts about the Bible's veracity and authority.

In the twentieth century the debates about the Bible escalated as Protestants recognized that even such simple matters as translation were bound up with interpretation. Consequently, evangelicals suspected the Revised Standard Version as a liberal Bible, and eventually countered with the New International Version, a translation produced by conservative scholars. Along the way, Protestants demonstrated what Catholics already knew—namely, that the Bible never stands alone but, even in its translation, is situated in a web of relationships that involve the authority of church leaders and questions about who has responsibility for determining orthodoxy.

These books, then, are sobering reading for Protestants. As soon as anyone reproduces the Bible for others to own and read, human agency becomes entangled with divine authority. The question is which person, institution, or scholar should be responsible for controlling access to the Bible.

That may be an indelicate way of putting the matter, especially for Protestants who think human authority of any kind should stay out of the way of divine revelation. But inevitably someone takes charge, either the market (as Gutjahr shows) or churchmen (as Thuesen documents). One should not have to be Roman Catholic to sense that churches may be a more appropriate context than the market for supervising the reproduction of the Bible. But thanks to the American Protestant habits of Bible-only-ism and anti-clericalism, most Protestants are so far removed from the wisdom of ecclesiology that they may need some instruction from their Catholic neighbors. Short of that, these books could well provide a useful guide to reflection.


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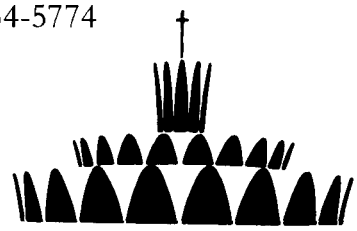


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# Hitler's Pope?

**HITLER, THE WAR, AND THE POPE.** By RONALD J. RYCHLAK. *Genesis. 548 pp. $26.95.*

***Reviewed by* John Jay Hughes**

AMID THE FLOOD of tributes to Pope Pius XII following his death on October 9, 1958, those of Jewish leaders were especially warm. "During the ten years of Nazi terror," said Golda Meir, then Israeli representative to the United Nations and later Prime Minister of Israel, "the Pope raised his voice to condemn the persecutors and to commiserate with their victims." Elio Toaff, who as Rome's Chief Rabbi would one day welcome another pope to his synagogue, said that Italian Jews "more than anyone else . . . had the opportunity to appreciate the great kindness, filled with compassion and magnanimity, that the Pope displayed during the terrible years of persecution and terror." The tributes of major rabbis in New York alone were so numerous that it took three issues of the *New York Times* to report them all. Praise came also from the Jewish press. "There was probably not a single ruler of our generation," wrote the Winnipeg *Jewish Post*, "who did more to help the Jews in their hour of greatest tragedy . . . than the late Pope."

The triumphal car got off to a good start. But vengeance came limping after in the form of the German playwright Rolf Hochhuth. His play *The Deputy*, first performed and published in 1963, portrayed Pius XII as indifferent to the Holocaust, concerned chiefly to preserve the financial interests of the institution over which he presided in imperial isolation. Born in 1931, Hochhuth was too young to have experienced the events of which he wrote. But his play captured the imagination of a generation starting to protest against authority in all forms. Ever since, the wartime Pontiff has been the anti-hero of a Black Legend. He has been cast as the one wartime leader who might have stopped the slaughter of six million Jews, but who failed to do so out of cowardice, cynicism, indifference, and even (in the recently expanded version of the indictment) anti-Semitism.

Acceptance of this legend is now so widespread that the Pope's supposed "silence" during the Holocaust was the starting point for all media comment on John Paul II's prayer for forgiveness of Catholic sins in March of this year and his subsequent visit to Israel. There are even Catholics willing to propagate the myth of Pius XII's silence. Mercy Sister Carmel McEnroy, who holds professorships at a Catholic college and seminary, wrote in an article replete with feminist anger in the *National Catholic Reporter*: "It would have been nice if [John Paul II] had denounced the Holocaust and Rome's silent acquiescence in it."

RONALD J. RYCHLAK, a professor and dean at the University of Mississippi's School of Law, claims that he had never heard of the Black Legend until a few years ago, when a friend of his "accused Pope Pius XII of having been a Nazi." Suspecting that his friend might be onto something, Rychlak began to investigate. This book is the result. Starting in the 1920s and concluding with Pius XII's death, Rychlak presents the judgment of the Pope's contemporaries in rich detail. A concluding chapter analyzes the charges against the Pontiff in the form of ten questions and finds them without foundation.

"It is not true that contemporaries misjudge a man," George Santayana wrote. "Contemporaries

JOHN JAY HUGHES *is a priest of the St. Louis archdiocese and a church historian.*


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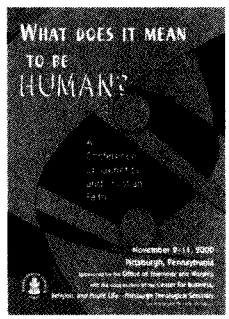


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judge him much better than posterity, which is composed of critics no less egotistical, and obliged to rely exclusively on documents easily misinterpreted." The *New York Times* is in the forefront today of those propagating the myth of Pius XII's "silence." As the story unfolded, however, the "newspaper of record" saw things differently:

• "NAZIS WARNED IN LOURDES": reporting the protest in 1935 of then Cardinal Pacelli against "superstitions of race and blood." When Pacelli was elected Pope on March 2, 1939, the *Times* reported "nearly general applause around the world," except in Germany.

• "POPE CONDEMNS DICTATORS, TREATY VIOLATORS, RACISM": three-column front-page headline reporting the Pope's first encyclical, October 28, 1939.

• "VATICAN DENOUNCES ATROCITIES IN POLAND; GERMANS CALLED EVEN WORSE THAN RUSSIANS" ( January 23, 1940).

• "JEWS' RIGHTS DEFENDED": reporting the Pope's "burning words to [Nazi Foreign Minister] Ribbentrop in defense of the Jews in Germany and Poland" (March 14, 1940).

• "Pius XII is a lonely voice in the silence and darkness enveloping Europe this Christmas. . . . The Pope put himself squarely against Nazism" (December 25, 1941).

• "The papacy is throwing the whole weight of its publicizing facilities into an exposé" of Nazi atrocities (through Vatican radio): January 24, 1942.

• "POPE IS SAID TO PLEAD FOR JEWS LISTED FOR REMOVAL FROM FRANCE" (August 6, 1942). And on August 27: "VICHY SEIZES JEWS; POPE PIUS IGNORED."

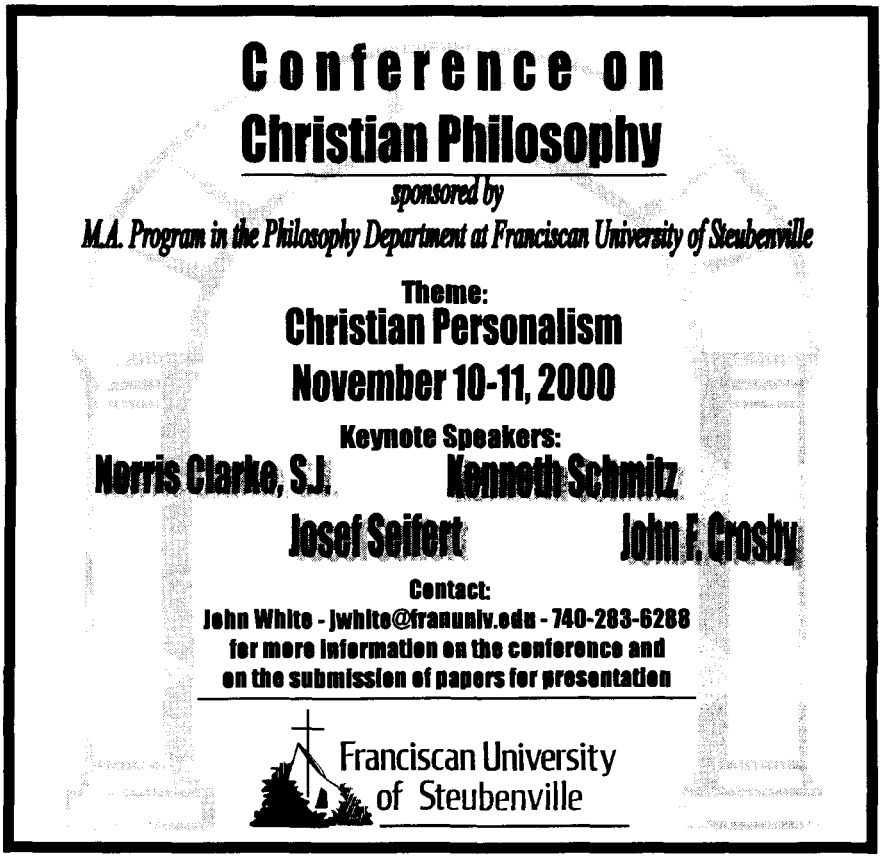
• "This Christmas [1942] more than ever [the Pope] is a lonely voice crying out of the silence of a continent": editorial on the Pope's reference to "the hundreds of thousands who, . . . solely because of their nation or race, have been condemned to death or progressive extinction."

• On August 21, 1944, Pulitzer Prize laureate Anne O'Hare McCormick wrote in the *Times* that the Pope had given "first priority" to saving Jews.

• "Under the Pope's direction the Holy See did an exemplary job of sheltering and championing the victims of the Nazi-Fascist regime. . . . None [in Rome] doubts that the general feeling of the Roman Curia was anti-Fascist and very strongly anti-Nazi": *Times* reporter Herbert L. Matthews, October 15, 1944.

Expressions of thanks by Jewish leaders, throughout the war and at its conclusion, were effusive. "The people of Israel will never forget what His Holiness is doing for us," Chief Rabbi Herzog of Palestine wrote in one of his many wartime communications to the Holy See. On October 11, 1945, the *New York Times* reported a gift to the Vatican of $20,000 from the World Jewish Congress "in recognition of the work of the Holy See in rescuing Jews from Fascist and Nazi persecution."

The perception of Pius XII's contemporaries, documented by Rychlak in far greater detail than can be summarized here, is virtually unknown today. When adverted to, it is dismissed as irrelevant, or simply wrong. Why? Hochhuth's play may have occasioned the change; it cannot have caused it. Hochhuth's indictment of the Pope came, as already noted, just as the rebellion against authority was getting under-



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way in Western democracies. The demonization of an authority figure revered by millions was welcome to an age proclaiming the death of God and rejecting the pretensions of those claiming to speak in His name.

In the epilogue to his book, Rychlak deals with the most recent statement of the case against Pius XII, the one made by John Cornwell in his book *Hitler's Pope,* which appeared when Rychlak's manuscript was substantially complete. Rychlak cites abundant evidence contradicting Cornwell's claim that his original intention was to defend Pius XII against the calumny of the Black Legend, but that "previously unseen material" which Cornwell studied "for months on end" in the secret Vatican archives reduced him to the "state of moral shock" that resulted in *Hitler's Pope.* In reality, Cornwell spent only three weeks doing research in the Vatican archives, during which time he did not even make daily visits. None of the material he cites was "previously unseen."

A 1919 letter Pacelli wrote when he was nuncio in Munich, which Cornwell calls "a ticking time bomb" and proof of anti-Semitism, appeared in print several years before Cornwell started his research. The letter reports an attack on the Munich nunciature by a band of Communist thugs led by "a young Russian Jew: pale, dirty, with vacant eyes, hoarse voice, vulgar, repulsive, with a face that is both intelligent and sly." In truth, this description was made by an aide, not by Pacelli—who did not witness the incident. Though this language has been criminalized by today's guardians of political correctness, it was hardly remarkable eighty years ago. Moreover, it correctly states the facts. It no more proves Pacelli's lifelong anti-Semitism than do certain incidents from his early schooling, which Rychlak shows that Cornwell has either misunderstood or misinterpreted.

Rychlak also demonstrates that Cornwell misrepresents Pacelli's role as papal Secretary of State and his motives in negotiating the Holy See's Concordat with Hitler in July 1933. Cornwell's source is the German Protestant Klaus Scholder, whose work is available in English translation and whom Cornwell calls "unchallenged in German scholarship." In fact, Scholder's work has been decisively refuted by two German Catholic historians whose works remain untranslated: the late Ludwig Volk, S.J., and Konrad Repgen. (Cornwell appears to

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have used no German sources at all.)

The initiative for the Concordat came not from Rome (as Cornwell, following Scholder, claims) but from Hitler. Far from weakening the resistance of German Catholics to Hitler, as Cornwell contends, the treaty contained protections for the Church that were eagerly desired at the time by the German bishops. Moreover, Pacelli was more realistic about the value of Hitler's promises than most political leaders, telling the British Minister to the Holy See that while he expected Hitler to violate some of the Concordat's provisions, he probably would not violate all of them at the same time.

Cornwell makes much of Pius XII's supposed indifference to the Nazi roundup of Roman Jews on October 16, 1943, shown (he contends) by the Pope's failure to mention it in a conversation with the American official Harold Tittmann the very next day. Though Tittmann's published report is dated October 17, this is clearly erroneous. The Vatican records show that the conversation took place October 14; thus, Rychlak writes, "The Pope did not mention the roundup of Jews because it had not yet happened." In fact, thousands of Roman Jews were saved by the Pope. When Robert Katz (another star witness for Cornwell) claimed otherwise after Pius XII's death, the Pope's niece won an action for libel from the Italian Supreme Court. Cornwell falsely claims that the verdict was "inconclusive."

Similarly skewed is Cornwell's account of papal policy toward the wartime Ustashi regime in Croatia, which cooperated with Nazi persecution of Jews. Far from approving of the regime, the Holy See refused to recognize it and mounted feverish efforts to help Jews in Croatia. To make his point, Cornwell repeats postwar charges by the Yugoslav Communist government that the Croatian Archbishop Stepinac supported the Ustashi regime. But Stepinac's approval was short-lived. After learning of the regime's brutality and receiving instructions from Rome, he vigorously condemned the regime and worked to save its victims. Following Stepinac's postwar conviction by a Communist court, widely recognized even then as a frame-up, the American Jewish leader Louis Braier defended Stepinac, calling him "a great man of the Church . . . who spoke openly and fearlessly against the racial law. After His Holiness Pius XII, he was the greatest defender of the Jews in persecuted Europe."

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While Rychlak's refutation of the Black Legend is impressive, it is unlikely to change many minds. The myth of Pius XII's silence and inactivity serves a function similar to that of the myths in classical antiquity: it gives an explanation for what would otherwise be unintelligible. Moreover, deeply held beliefs seldom yield to facts. Already an Israeli member of the panel charged with evaluating the twelve published volumes of wartime documents from the Vatican archives has called Pius XII "complicit in German policy."

In the face of six million dead, no one can claim that enough was done. To claim, however, that nothing was done—or that the failure to do more was the result of cynicism or indifference—is a grave falsification of history. When the victim of this falsification is a person of demonstrable moral greatness, it is shameful.

## Evangelicals and the Rule of Faith

**Retrieving the Tradition and Renewing Evangelicalism: A Primer for Suspicious Protestants.** By D. H. Williams. *Eerdmans. 243 pp. $16.*

***Reviewed by* Timothy George**

This book is at once a protest and a lamentation against what might be called the tradition of traditionless evangelicalism. D. H. Williams is an ordained Baptist minister who teaches patristics and historical theology at a Roman Catholic school, Loyola University of Chicago. His earlier writings, especially his book *Arianism After Arius*, have established him as a careful scholar of doctrinal development in the early Church. He draws on that research in this book as he seeks to reengage his own evangelical community with the Great Tradition of historic Christian orthodoxy embodied in the conciliar decisions of the fourth and fifth centuries.

Admittedly, this is a daunting task given the theological amnesia that afflicts many contemporary evangelicals today. The problem with amnesia, as Williams points out, is not only that it robs its victims of memories of the past but also that it destroys their sense of identity here and now. Having cut themselves loose from the nurturing roots of Christian faith through the centuries, evangelicals are especially susceptible to the heresy of contemporaneity, that is, the penchant to regard our own time, our own immediate contacts, and ultimately ourselves, as the center of all spiritual reality in relation to which everything else is ordered for our benefit. This mindset is reflected in the pop-pietism of evangelical ditties such as this: "Me and Jesus, we've got a good thing going; me and him, we've got it all worked out." This is hardly the stuff of which martyrs are made and Williams argues against it with passion and learning.

Calling himself "a true son of the Protestant Reformation," Williams offers a sympathetic and constructive, though at times severe, critique of the evangelical disengagement from the wider Christian heritage, a heritage shaped by the coinherence of Scripture and Tradition. He shows that the earliest formation of the Christian tradition is embodied in the Holy Scriptures themselves: that which Paul "received" from the Lord, he also "delivered" to his readers (1 Corinthians 11:23; 15:3). In the context of describing their salvation and deliverance from sin, Paul reminded the Roman Christians of "that pattern of teaching to which

Timothy George *is Dean of Beeson Divinity School of Samford University and senior editor of* Christianity Today. *His books include* Theology of the Reformers *and* The New American Commentary on Galatians.

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you were committed" (Romans 6:17). The Church itself was seen as "the pillar and foundation of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). To this community of faith the apostles entrusted the *depositum fidei*, a pattern of sound teaching, reflected in the creeds and confessions of the early Church, many of which are found in nuce in the Bible itself.

THIS RULE OF FAITH, as it came to be called, was shaped by the liturgical and catechetical needs of the worshiping and evangelizing church. Such *regulae* were not seen as separate "sources" of authority over against the prophetic and apostolic witness of the Scriptures, but rather as the self-authenticating distillation of the same. Indeed, these affirmations played an important role in the canonical formation of the New Testament itself. In deciding whether this or that writing was authentically apostolic, what mattered most was not authorship (who wrote Hebrews?) but fidelity to the apostolic kerygma, "the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3). As Williams rightly contends, the rule of faith served a regulating function in the life of the early Church, "expounding the cardinal points of theology which evangelical Christians still believe and confess to this day."

But if this is so, then why are so many evangelicals either ignorant or disdainful of the classic doctrines of the Christian tradition? Why do so many evangelical churches lack any direct sense of continuity with the unfolding story of the people of God through the centuries? As Williams sees it, the chief culprit here is a particular concept of the "fall" of the Church that became popular in the Radical Reformation and has remained a mainstay in subsequent Free Church historiography.

In this view, the true church of the apostles and early martyrs lost its evangelical and biblical character at the conversion of Constantine and the Christianization of the Roman Empire in the fourth century. Once Christianity became an established religion, so the theory goes, the coercive power of the Empire was placed at the disposal of ecclesial orthodoxy that in turn led to the Inquisition, the Crusades, and the infamous abuses of the medieval papacy. The "true" church, recovered by Anabaptists, Pietists, and other Free Church Christians, is essentially discontinuous with the corrupt Christendom that held sway for a millennium and more—from, say, Constantine to Bloody Mary.


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Historically, the fall paradigm has had an important influence on two streams of evangelical ecclesiology: restitutionism and successionism. Continental Anabaptists, English Separatists, and biblical restorationists sought not so much to purify the Church as to restore it to its original New Testament condition. This they did by gathering new congregations of "visible saints," organized according to the blueprint of church order in the New Testament. Others, however, saw no need to restore the true Church for, as they claimed, they had never lost it. They pointed to an unbroken succession of dissenting and sectarian groups stretching through the centuries from pre-Constantinian martyrs to their own conventicles. While these two models were at odds with one another, they were united in rejecting much of the catholic substance of the Great Tradition.

Williams is right to criticize the fall paradigm on both historical and theological grounds. Its proponents have too often been simplistic in their idealized reconstruction of the primitive Church and too dismissive of the continuity of believing Christians through the ages. It is doubtful, however, that the fall paradigm can carry all the explanatory weight Williams wants it to bear. In the first place, the concept of the fall of the Church was not invented by Free Church pioneers but was a common motif among many reform movements, including the Waldensians and Spiritual Franciscans, prior to the Reformation and Luther himself in the sixteenth century. Luther was less drastic than the Anabaptists in his placement of the fall, identifying it more with Pope Gregory VII than with Constantine, but he recognized periods of great decline and apostasy in church history. His purpose was to reform the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church on the basis of the Word of God.

Further, the fall paradigm can play a positive role in reformational ecclesiologies, no less than more radical ones, for it reminds us that the Church ever exists under the judgment of the Word of God with


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which it must never be confused. Jesus promised that the gates of Hell would never prevail against the Church, but he did not guarantee the eternal security of any local congregation or denomination. Indeed, the warnings of the risen Christ to the churches of Revelation 2-3 say the contrary.

Williams does an excellent job of showing why spiritual and theological renewal among evangelicals today cannot bypass the great doctrinal landmarks of early catholic Christianity. One can be catholic without being Roman Catholic, and orthodox without being Eastern Orthodox. Historically, evangelicals have affirmed the trinitarian and Christological consensus of the early Church, as necessitated by, and congruent with, the teaching of Holy Scripture. These classic statements of the faith are not independent authorities alongside or supplementary to the Bible; they are accurate expositions and summaries of the Bible itself. Only at great peril do evangelicals today play fast and loose with the unfolding pattern of Christian truth Williams outlines in this volume. Some evangelical theologians have argued for a minimalist credo of "Jesus is Lord" as fully sufficient for the Church in a postmodern, postdogmatic era. Such a standard, however, would permit full fellowship with Marcion, Arius, and Pelagius, to name only three notable heretics. We need not affirm the infallibility and irreformability of all church councils in order to recognize the faithful witness of the historic creeds to the one triune God of love and grace.

TO MAKE this claim is neither to abandon the principle of *sola scriptura*, rightly understood, nor to depart from the evangelical heritage at its best. Williams chides his own Baptist tradition for overemphasizing "soul competency" and privatized religious experience. But most of the Baptist writers he cites belong to the libertarian wing of this movement, a group of scholars shaped more by Schleiermacher and William James than by John Bunyan and Andrew Fuller. One can find a sturdier Baptist theology in the writings of John Gill (who cited patristic sources with the frequency of a Calvin), James Petigru Boyce (who studied theology with Charles Hodge at Princeton), and Augustus H. Strong. At the inaugural meeting of the Baptist World Alliance in London in 1905, the entire assembly stood to recite in unison the Apostles' Creed, an act fully in keeping with the Baptist confessional heritage. Baptists and other Free Church believers are of course right to protest against aspects of the Constantinian legacy. Their distinctive witness on behalf of religious liberty is as much needed today as it has ever been. But this can be done without denying the catholicity of the evangelical faith.

Williams also gently criticizes some contemporary evangelicals for touting Reformation principles as the sole basis of evangelical identity. The current theological crisis we face, he says, "requires more than repackaging theological mandates and arguments from the Reformation and asserting them with new vigor." I agree with this assessment, and admit that some advocates of neo-Reformationism sound more like cheerleaders of a sect than members of the Church reformed and ever reforming on the basis of the Word of God.

But Williams himself would do well to ponder more deeply the intrinsic connection, which he admits, between the development of doctrine in the early Church and the Reformation. No doubt the confessional battles of the sixteenth century were shaped by the polemical exigencies of that age, but the doctrine of justification by faith

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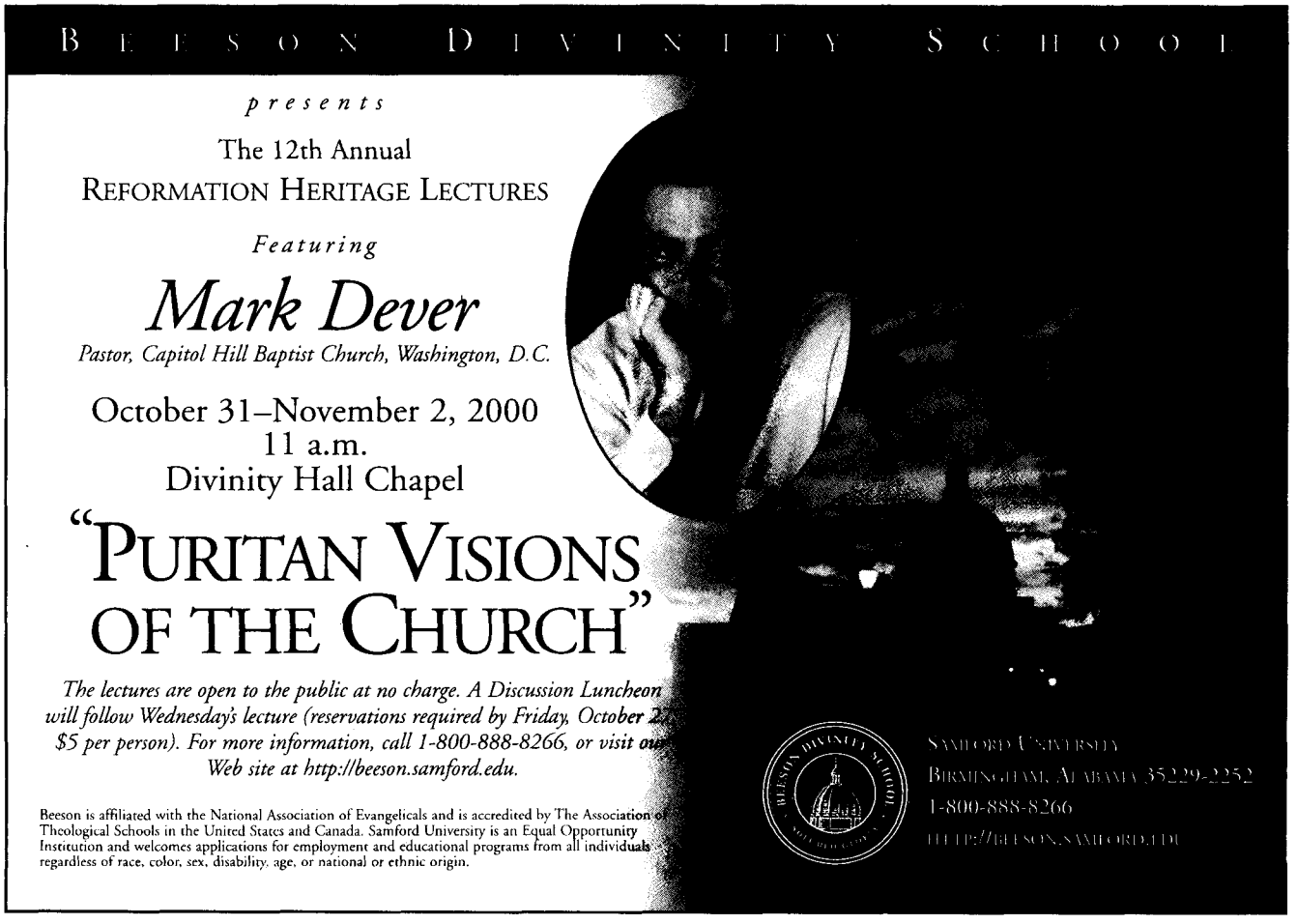
alone was not a new teaching invented by the reformers. They argued like this: if the God of the Bible is the one triune God of holiness and love, as the Fathers of Nicea declared Him to be; and if Jesus Christ is fully God and truly man, as the Council of Chalcedon affirmed that he is; and if original sin is really as virulent and incapacitating as St. Augustine (and the mainline Catholic tradition after him) knew that it was—then only a radical doctrine of grace and justification by faith alone can account for God's mighty acts in salvation history. Williams is right: the Reformation does not terminate on itself. It is a program of theological *réssourcement* grounded in the trinitarian and Christological faith—the catholic faith—of the early Church, which itself is a faithful articulation of the prophetic and apostolic witness.

Williams has done a great service for the evangelical church in setting forth his case with clarity and a sense of urgency. That evangelicals, among others, are awakening to the kind of dynamic retrieval he calls for is evident both in the *Ancient Christian Commentary* series edited by Thomas Oden and published by InterVarsity Press, and the forthcoming Eerdmans series entitled *The Church's Bible*, edited by Robert L. Wilken, to which Williams himself is a contributor. That these major publishing projects have both been undertaken by evangelical presses is a good sign that theology in the service of the Church is still a valued project among some heirs of the Reformation.

# BRIEFLY NOTED

**Religion and the Rise of Historicism: W. M. L. de Wette, Jacob Burckhardt, and the Theological Origins of Nineteenth-Century Historical Consciousness.** By Thomas Albert Howard. *Cambridge University Press. 250 pp. $49.95.*

Jacob Burckhardt, the great Swiss-German historian of the Renaissance, son of the highest ranking Protestant pastor in Basel and himself intent upon preparation for the ministry, studied theology at the University of Basel (1837-39). There he was deeply influenced by the radical historical criticism of W. M. L. de Wette, who, though now largely unknown, was at the time an important figure on the German theologi-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cal scene. As a result of this religious crisis, Burckhardt vowed to become an "honest heretic" (rather than a duplicitous theologian) and gave up theology in favor of the study of history. Out of that set of chance circumstances, Thomas Howard weaves a learned narrative about mid-nineteenth-century German intellectual trends, with Burckhardt at the center of the story. After his loss of faith, Burckhardt set about writing a "secular" history of Christianity's emergence and decline in Europe. Howard demonstrates, however, that the shape of this story is deeply marked by a theological undercurrent that remained embedded in Burckhardt's thought. The cultural pessimism so characteristic of Burckhardt was, Howard thinks, a transmutation of the Christian teaching of original sin. Thus, Howard provides not only an engaging narrative of events that continue to shape our own thinking but also a theory about the nature of European secular thought as less a fundamental break with our religious heritage than a reworking of older, theological ways of interpreting life. Some readers may be more interested in Howard's contribution to theoretical arguments about the nature of secularity. Others may be drawn more by the power of his narrative. Both sorts will be richly rewarded.

*— Gilbert Meilaender*

**LIFE IS A MIRACLE: AN ESSAY AGAINST MODERN SUPERSTITION.** By WENDELL BERRY. *Counterpoint. 153 pp. $21.*

This little volume by Wendell Berry, who is at once poet and philosopher, novelist and farmer, refreshes the mind and soul in a number of ways, not the least of which is the author's ability to engage in thoughtful cultural criticism while transcending partisan politics. Much of the book is devoted to a blistering critique of E. O. Wilson's *Consilience,* which attempts to achieve a unity of the disciplines but in actuality labors to subject the arts and religion to the materialist dogma that reigns in the realm of modern science. Berry contends that many spokesmen for science have turned it into a religion, and in many ways it rules over us. "I want to know," asks Berry, "by what power it has crowned and mitered itself." To Berry, the world Wilson envisions is "a place were the most genetically favored and the most richly subsidized scientists determine the future by 'plunging ahead,' each isolated in his or her vision of 'new terrain,' and each cut off from any restraining affection for old terrain." Opposing Wilson's materialism and reductionism as well as industrialism in general, Berry favors localism, community responsibility, and mutual dependence. His is an eloquent voice at odds with certain reigning ideologies, and a voice deserving of attention.

*— Jeff McAlister*

**THE BODY OF COMPASSION: ETHICS, MEDICINE, AND THE CHURCH.** By JOEL JAMES SHUMAN. *Westview. 216 pp. $25.*

This book, appearing in the series edited by Stanley Hauerwas and Peter Ochs, *Radical Traditions: Theology in a Postcritical Key,* bears all the marks of the work of the best Hauerwas students—a healthy inclination to critique modernity (though coupled with an unhealthy reluctance to subject one's own instruments of critique to the same criticism), a seriousness about the Christian theological and liturgical traditions, a virtues approach to ethics, and good sense about where to find moral wisdom. This work, like that of Shuman's editor and mentor, is sometimes deeply flawed and frequently frustrating, but also deeply humane. Shuman's critique of contemporary medicine and contemporary medical ethics is neither lucid nor compelling. On the other hand, the second half of the book, in which he plumbs trinitarian theology, Christian liturgy, and the writing of Flannery O'Connor and Wendell Berry for an understanding of the body, health, and community, is most welcome and rewarding. Readers will

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also be grateful for the final chapter on the Church and the virtues of care.

— *Thomas D. Kennedy*

**Newman's Challenge.** By Stanley L. Jaki. *Eerdmans. 323 pp. $20.*

The author, a Benedictine priest well known for his work in the philosophy of science, here gathers up thirteen previously published essays on Newman with a new chapter to introduce them. Quoting selectively from Newman's works (especially his *Letters and Diaries*), Jaki portrays Newman as an intransigent supernaturalist, adamantly opposed to dissent and ecumenism. Although Jaki is knowledgeable and on some points informative, his depiction of Newman is skewed by his desire to make him a weapon against "new" theologians, Protestant and Catholic alike, and even an adversary of Vatican II. While Jaki has every right to criticize liberal theologians, his tone is too dismissive. Newman, by contrast, was extremely careful to be fair to his opponents, to understand their point of view, and to enter into their difficulties and answer them patiently.

— *Avery Dulles, S.J.*

**The Long March: How the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s Changed America.** By Roger Kimball. *Encounter Books. 326 pp. $23.95.*

To smite opponents hip and thigh, and do so with wit and elegance, is the particular gift of Roger Kimball, author of *Tenured Radicals*, a book that is essential for understanding the current embarrassment of higher education. In the present and most worthy successor to that analysis, Kimball traces the astonishing success of those who acted on the exhortation of late 1960s and early 1970s radicals that they should conduct "the long march through the institutions." They have been marching ever since and, in battle after battle, have generally prevailed. Not surprisingly, many of the craftiest soldiers in the culture wars deny that there are any such wars going on. Their purpose is to bring off a revolution and then declare it to be not a revolution but the normal state of things, progressively considered. Kimball is respectful of his opponents in paying close attention to their ideas before dissecting those ideas with devastating effect. Readers of Kimball's running cultural commentary in the *New Criterion* will relish this book's pulling together a comprehensive argument, and those encountering Kimball for the first time will be given good reason to add the *New Criterion* to their reading list.

**Things That Count.** By Gilbert Meilaender. *ISI. 392 pp. $24.95.*

Twenty-three essays, ten of which first appeared in these pages, on the general theme of what it means to live a good life. "In the writing of Gilbert Meilaender moral wisdom is joined to stylistic grace, and perennial truths are renewed in engagement with contemporary concerns. There is nobody writing on ethics today whose work is more consistently rewarding." That is from the blurb by the Editor-in-Chief of this journal. We asked him, and he says he stands by every word of it.

**Schall on Chesterton.** By James V. Schall. *Catholic University of America. 258 pp. $24.95 paper.*

These "timely essays on timeless paradoxes" demonstrate that Father Schall is a worthy practitioner of the debunking and illuminating exuberance associated with the great GKC.

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**SIN, DEATH, AND THE DEVIL.** Edited by CARL E. BRAATEN and ROBERT W. JENSON. *Eerdmans. 132 pp. $15 paper.*

Wide-ranging but trenchant essays addressing problems of good and evil, life and death, in contemporary cultures by, inter alia, the editors, Stanley Hauerwas, Vigen Guroian, and Richard John Neuhaus. Jenson's examination of nihilism, "Much Ado About Nothingness," is outstanding.

**THE KNIGHTS OF THE BRUSH: THE HUDSON RIVER SCHOOL AND THE MORAL LANDSCAPE.** By JAMES F. COOPER. *Hudson Hills. 107 pp. $35.*

Very handsomely illustrated with fifty-eight color plates of the works of nineteenth-century artists Frederic Edwin Church, Thomas Cole, Jasper Francis Cropsey, and others, *The Knights of the Brush* is cultural criticism of a high order. It is also a poignant and persuasive appeal for the recovery of art in the service of transcendent beauty, which is inseparable, James Cooper contends in agreement with all who have understood civilization, from the good and the true.

**JEWISH WRITERS/IRISH WRITERS: SELECTED ESSAYS ON THE LOVE OF WORDS.** By MAURICE WOHGELERNTER. *Transaction. 196 pp. $34.95.*

An intriguing (yes, that's the right word) set of reflections on, among other things, the similarities and dissimilarities between the literary imaginations of two peoples obsessed by language. Included is a long letter to Ari Goldman, a former *New York Times* reporter, on why his popular book about a year at Harvard Divinity School makes a hash of authentic Judaism and is, in sum, a deep embarrassment.

**THE MILLENNIUM CITY: A NEW URBAN PARADIGM FOR 21ST CENTURY AMERICA.** Edited by MYRON MAGNET. *Ivan R. Dee. 440 pp. $27.50.*

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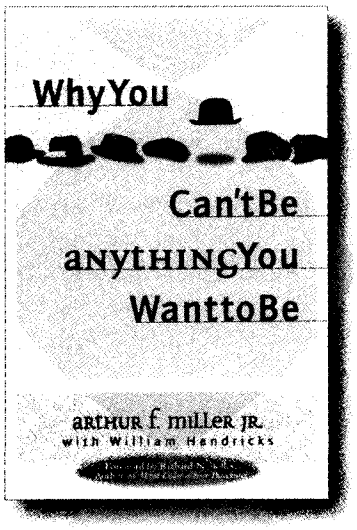


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**The Response of Orthodox Jewry in the United States to the Holocaust.** By Efraim Zuroff. *Yeshiva University Press. 315 pp. $39.95.*

At the outbreak of World War II the Orthodox rabbinate in America organized a rescue effort on behalf of refugee rabbis and yeshiva students, provoking controversy among American Jewish leaders who wanted a united program on behalf of all threatened Jews. A valuable contribution both to Holocaust history and to understanding changing alignments in American Jewish leadership.

**I May Not Get There With You: The True Martin Luther King, Jr.** By Eric Michael Dyson. *Free Press. 404 pp. $25.*

The author contends that King was ever so much more radical, economically and socially, than the depiction that accompanies his civic "canonization." Dyson cites considerable evidence in support of this thesis, as considerable evidence can be cited against it. Either way, the case is not conclusive. Scholars and journalists will continue to debate these questions but, contra Dyson, that debate will have, and should have, little bearing on what was officially intended in making him an American icon.

**From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought.** Edited by Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan. *Eerdmans. 838 pp. $70 cloth, $45 paper.*

This is a magnificent achievement deserving of highest praise, and an essential collection at a time when "political theology" is much discussed without reference to its history. The O'Donovans bring together the key texts from the patristic to early modern periods, providing succinct and illuminating introductions that would by themselves make a valuable book. No library aspiring to theological adequacy can be without *From Irenaeus to Grotius.*

**Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods.** By Gerald R. McDermott. *Oxford University Press. 245 pp. $45.*

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) is frequently and with considerable right called America's greatest theologian. McDermott of Roanoke College makes an impressive case that Edwards' much writing against Arminianism was really aimed at the Deism that had established itself as the religion of the Enlightenment in Britain. While he argued on terms largely set by the Deists, Edwards laid the foundation for an appreciation of world religions and even something like universal salvation on solidly Christian grounds. In this, says the author, he was like Karl Barth in providing a way of thinking that leads to conclusions he himself rejected. McDermott's depiction of Deism, including its links to anti-Semitism in its view of what today is called "the

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scandal of particularity," is masterful. His Edwards is emphatically not the Calvinist inveighing against sinners in the hands of an angry God. Whether he goes too far in distancing Edwards from Calvin and Calvinism is something for Edwards scholars to dispute. What is beyond dispute is that McDermott has provided a fetching introduction to the genius of one of America's greatest thinkers in a book that is both learned and uncommonly well written.

**There's No Place Like Work: How Business, Government, and Our Obsession with Work Have Driven Parents from Home.** by Brian C. Robertson. *Spence. 206 pp. $24.95.*

The author takes both liberals and conservatives to task for not recognizing what our "obsession with work" is doing to the family. This is a spirited and informed polemic, with the additional merit of proposing public policies and changes of attitude that can help restore the dignity and satisfactions of domestic life. Especially incisive is Robertson's account of the way in which sundry feminisms have been captured by the business establishment.

**Ready or Not: Why Treating Children as Small Adults Endangers Their Future—and Ours.** By Kay S. Hymowitz. *Free Press. 290 pp. $25.*

To people who have not been rewired by sundry educational and psychological experts, it may seem obvious that children are children. Hymowitz makes a convincing case against treating children as autonomous rights-bearing agents, and for letting them be dependents who need to be protected as they mature—slowly.

**The J. I. Packer Collection.** Edited by Alister McGrath. *InterVarsity. 288 pp. $16.95 paper.*

An Anglican born in Britain, J. I. Packer has become one of the most popular and influential writers of evangelical Protestantism, and is a prime mover in the project known as "Evangelicals and Catholics Together." This collection, bringing together sixteen essays from the 1950s to the present, is an admirable introduction to his thought and should be welcomed by readers who want to understand the driving ideas in contemporary evangelicalism.

**Death and Immortality.** By Josef Pieper. *St. Augustine's Press. 134 pp. $11 paper.*

A most welcome reprint of a justly famous little book first published in 1968. Pieper brilliantly explores the ways in which death is both decision and fate, both part of life and the enemy of life. The word that inevitably suggests itself is "classic."

**Catholic Divorce: The Deception of Annulments.** Edited by Pierre Hegy and Joseph Martos. *Continuum. 240 pp. $22.95.*

The unsubtle title is the message. Almost nobody is satisfied with the current process of annulment as it is variously working in the Catholic Church. The essayists present the usual criticisms but do not make a persuasive case that divorce can be squared with the Catholic and biblical teaching on the indissolubility of marriage.

**Ecumenical Theology in Worship, Doctrine, and Life.** Edited by David S. Cunningham et al. *Oxford University Press. 312 pp. $49.95.*

A festschrift for Geoffrey Wainwright, a Methodist at Duke University who has made extraordinary contributions in ecumenical theology. Of the twenty-four essays, of special interest are George Tavard on the similarity between Protestant views of the "assurance of faith" and Catholic teaching on infallibility, and Edward T. Oakes on the place of Christocentric particularity in the ecumenical thought of Hans Urs von Balthasar.

**Man of the Millennium: John Paul II.** By Luigi Accattoli. *Pauline Books. 276 pp. $19.95 paper.*

The longtime Vatican correspondent for the Italian paper *Corriere della Sera* provides a brief, accessible, sympathetic, and altogether useful overview of the man and the pontificate. As one might expect, he is especially astute in discussing the Pope's relations with the media. Accattoli, like many Europeans, has an anti-American bias that is evident in his shortchanging of John Paul's teaching on democracy and the market economy, but the bias is mild and does not seriously detract from this otherwise reliable and very readable guide.

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# THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

## The Liberated Lost

The idea that religion is the heart of culture and culture is the form of religion has been proposed in various ways by Christian thinkers over the years, and there is, I believe, a great deal to it. The danger, of course, is that it can lead to a smooth synthesis of religion and culture that typically ends up making religion superfluous. This was the case with the cultural Protestantism in Germany against which Karl Barth so magnificently posited his theological "*Nein*!" And it is, mutatis mutandis, the case with mainline/oldline Protestantism in this country today. It is a phenomenon that has been with us for a long time, as I was reminded upon having occasion to go back to George Henry Lewes' *The Life of Goethe*, a book first published in 1855 that has gone through many editions.

Lewes, who was the common-law husband of novelist George Eliot for many years, is justly criticized for being too preoccupied with the young Goethe of *Werther* and the Sturm und Drang period, but his biography reveals, however inadvertently, a cultural optimism that could safely accommodate such melodramatics. The world was finally a good and solid place. As a child, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's doubts about conventional religion were raised when, during a terrible thunderstorm, he and his sister were dragged into a dark passage "where the whole household, distracted with fear, tried to conciliate the angry Deity by frightful groans and prayers." Lewes writes: "Many children are thus made skeptics; but in a deeply reflective mind such thoughts never long abide, at least not under the influences of modern culture, which teaches that Evil is essentially a narrow finite thing, thrown into obscurity on any comprehensive view of the Universe; and that the amount of evil massed together from every quarter must be held as small compared with the broad beneficence of Nature." Such complacence may be harder to maintain a century and a half later, but it is hardly rare today, even among those who are thought to have deeply reflective minds.

The month of Goethe's birth, August 1749, Lewes writes, "was a momentous month to Germany, if only because it gave birth to the man whose influence on his nation has been greater than that of any man since Luther. . . . It was the middle of the eighteenth century: a period when the movement which had culminated in Luther was passing from religion to politics, and freedom of thought was translating itself into liberty of action. From theology the movement had communicated itself to philosophy, morals, and politics. The agitation was still mainly in the higher classes, but it was gradually descending to the lower. A period of deep unrest: big with events which would expand the conceptions of all men, and bewilder some of the wisest." Lewes' view of history in 1855 is at one with the standard account still to be found in many textbooks. "And was not the struggle of the whole eighteenth century a struggle for the recognition of individual worth, of Rights against Privileges, of Liberty against Tradition? Such also was the struggle of the sixteenth century. The Reformation was to Religion what the [French] Revolution was to Politics: a stand against the tyranny of Tradition—a battle for the rights of *individual* liberty of thought and action, against the absolute prescriptions of privileged classes."

In this understanding, Luther's legendary "quest for a gracious God" is turned on its head. It is possible to unite even Luther and Spinoza in the cause of individual liberation. Of Spinoza, Goethe wrote that he "seemed to unveil a clear, broad view over the material and moral world. But what



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especially riveted me to him was the boundless disinterestedness which shone forth in every sentence. That wonderful sentiment, '*He who truly loves God must not require God to love him in return*' . . . filled my mind." Goethe was, says Lewes, boundlessly indifferent to this sect or that but nothing "could rob him of his love for the Holy Scriptures and for the Founder of Christianity. He therefore wrought out for his own private use a Christianity of his own." How very modern; or, as moderns are given to saying today, how very postmodern.

"The old faith," writes Lewes, "which for so long had made European life an organic unity, and which in its tottering weakness had received a mortal blow from Luther, was no longer universal, living, active, dominant; its place of universal directing power was vacant; a new faith had not arisen." But a new faith was waiting to be born. Of the Weimar of his own day, Lewes writes: "The theologic fire has long burnt itself out in Thuringia. In Weimar, where Luther preached, another preacher came, whom we know as Goethe. In the old church there is one portrait of Luther, painted by his friend Lucas Kranach, greatly prized, as well it may be; but for this one portrait of Luther, there are a hundred of Goethe. It is not Luther, but Goethe, they think of here; poetry, not theology, is the glory of Weimar. And, corresponding with this, we find the dominant characteristic of the place to be no magnificent church, no picturesque ancient buildings, no visible image of the earlier ages, but the sweet serenity of a lovely park." Lewes goes on to describe in detail Weimar's park, designed by Goethe, as the metaphor of modernity's achievement of sweet serenity.

References to Weimar today conjure very different images, images of anything but sweet serenity. The telling of the history of progress from Luther's rebellion to Goethe's well-designed park appears ludicrous today and rests, not incidentally, upon a caricature of Luther. The cultural nihilism associated with a later Weimar prepared the way for unspeakable horror. As John Paul II memorably said at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem: "How could man have such utter contempt for man? Because he had reached the point of contempt for God. Only a godless ideology could plan and carry out the extermination of a whole people."

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the "tottering weakness" of the "old faith" (which Luther intended to serve, in his way) has become, to the surprise of many, the only confident, coherent, comprehensive, and compelling proposal for the future of the human project. Yet there are many others—in the academy, the arts, and not least in our churches—who, lost in the park's ingenious labyrinth, continue the tradition of telling themselves the same old story of their liberation from the tyranny of tradition.

FT

# SINGING THE LORD'S SONGS

Dissatisfaction with the state of contemporary church music is now very widespread, which may or may not mean that some remedy is at hand. There are many tellings of the story of "what went wrong," and the other day I stumbled upon this telling by music critic Michael Howard. It is from his notes on the sleeve of an old 1974 Decca LP of Dvorak's Mass in D Major. (For younger readers, LP means long-playing record.)

> Anton Dvorak died in Prague on May 1, 1904 at the age of sixty-three. It had only been one year previously that Pope Pius X had issued his famous *motu proprio* which was to have such a devastating and impoverishing effect, albeit unintentionally, upon the music of the Roman Church. Pius X rightly wished to rid the Church of the rancid musical excesses with which it had become besotted in the latter part of the nineteenth century. But unfortunately, then as now, reforming zeal overexcited all too many ill-informed Princes of the Church, prelates, parish priests, and lay committees with monetary and other axes to grind—choral traditions were terminated, choirs disbanded; and all this not in honest terms of economy, or boredom, or time-saving but (in the guise of a spurious lip service to the Holy Father) on the grounds that glorious music, gloriously sung in a glorious building, was in some way a corruption of the true worship of Almighty God. Thus it came about that not only was the meretricious expelled from universal usage, but with it went virtually all the great music of Mozart and Haydn, Beethoven and Hummel, Liszt and Bruckner, and of course Dvorak for good measure. These meddling pietists had not the wit to see that they were transparently flouting the true intentions of the 1903 encyclical, let alone that their witlessness prevented them from discriminating between some of the admittedly more shallow early

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Salzburg masses by Mozart and the penitent on his knees which we both hear and experience in the same composer's Munich Kyrie.

The result, of course, was that religious music together with all other religious art found itself wearing the appalling clothing of mediocrity. T. S. Eliot, a propos Religion and Literature, said "For the great majority of people who love poetry, 'religious poetry' is a variety of minor poetry: the religious poet is not a poet who is treating the whole subject of poetry in a religious spirit, but . . . is leaving out what men consider their major passions, and thereby confessing his ignorance of them." By the time, in 1948, Stravinsky offered his Latin Mass to the Church, Rome would have none of it. Even the music of Palestrina has suffered something of an eclipse, and it is interesting to note that earlier in the century because of public disregard for Elgar, Jaeger was able to write to Dorabella that nevertheless were there to be "a dull new oratorio by Mascagni or Perosi, the papers would have had columns of gossip and gush about those two frauds." Now Perosi was appointed Musical Director of the Sistine Chapel in 1898, when he was barely twenty-six years old, and he was a principal adviser to Pope Pius X on the dicta of the 1903 encyclical. By 1905 he was constituted "Perpetual Master of the Pontifical Chapel"—and in spite of a mental breakdown in 1922, he returned to office within twelve months and remained there for many years to come.

It is painful to continue in too great detail on the history of music in church in the twentieth century. As always, church music spurned has taken its revenge and confounded the Church with the concert hall, the theatre, the opera house, and the gramophone record. Pitiful it is that we may study it, we may cherish it, and we may listen to it, but all too rarely may we use it in its proper context. Anyone who has been to High Mass in one of the fantastic churches in Prague will appreciate the depth of this tragedy.

Surely Michael Howard is right about the "appalling clothing of mediocrity." It is not just the neglect of Mozart, Haydn, and Dvorak, or even Gregorian chant. And few of our local places of worship can or should try to match the "fantastic churches" of Prague. Among Protestants and Catholics, the last several decades have witnessed a wholesale debauch of musical sensibilities and the squandering of magnificent traditions. A price I pay for hanging out so much with evangelical Protestants and speaking at pro-life events is that I am exposed to the most barbarous of musical kitsch in both Catholic and Protestant camps. Why do such good people indulge such bad music? At a recent pro-life rally in the midwest there was no less than ten minutes of a group of young people with high decibel electronic guitars screaming over and over again, "I love you Jeeesus!" That was it. And the mainly middle-aged crowd went wild. A rock concert without talent or imagination.

It is not simply a matter of doing what is popular. In the traditions that have been squandered, there is much that is popular, in the best sense of that term. I was recently given a CD, *Sing Lustily and With Good Courage*, which includes "gallery hymns" of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by Maddy Prior and the Carnival Band (CD-SDL-383). Here are magnificent renderings of "Who would true valour see" (John Bunyan), "Lo, He comes with clouds descending" (Charles Wesley), "The God of Abraham praise" (Thomas Olivers), and a dozen others that stir and form the souls of the gathered faithful glorifying God. The debased noises of unbridled subjectivism that are typical of what today is called entertainment worship are spiritual poison. We're not talking mere aesthetics here. There is nothing mere about the beautiful. The three transcendentals—the good, the true, and the beautiful—are inextricably entangled. The degradation of one degrades the others.

"I love you Jeeesus!" Or at another meeting, an orgy of self-praise, "We Are Here and We are Ali-i-i-i-ve!" Well, good for you. Such junk is an embarrassment to Christianity. One wonders what a sensible outsider stumbling into such a gathering might think. He would likely beat a hasty exit, and I wouldn't blame him. I would have, too, except I was scheduled to speak after the noise subsided. I saw in *Christianity Today* where one such group of sentimental bedlam was described as having "a joy that is contagious." Contagious as in smallpox. The joy is painfully forced. "Look how joyful we are!" If this is joy, give me melancholy. Don't tell me these people are sincere. The praise of God has nothing to do with being drenched by the agitated effusions of their sincerity. Sincerity is no excuse for tackiness. The world would be more beautiful and the Church more inviting were half the music directors in Christendom fired tomorrow. At least half. Christianity has over the centuries produced a musical heritage without parallel in human history. It is a great pity, for which some are criminally responsible, that most Christians are unaware of it. The circumstance described by Michael Howard in

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1974 has dramatically deteriorated since then, and there is no end in sight.

There now, I feel better having got that off my chest. And please don't tell me that this comment is too negative, that it is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness. It is not I who extinguished the candles of our musical legacy. Anyway, as I have had occasion to say before, sometimes it's helpful to curse the darkness. It keeps us from getting used to it.

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# CRISIS OF THE HOUSE DIVIDED

Of the making of lists there is no end. I am guilty, for instance, of having participated from time to time in the compiling of lists of the greatest books, or the most influential thinkers, or the most crucial turning points in history. For journals of opinion and academic groups, it's a little like playing Scrabble. The formerly Lutheran and now Orthodox church historian Jaroslav Pelikan tells me that he's always irritated by these "beauty contests" to elect the most important books—but not as irritated as he is when his books are not included. It should be noted that the selection in our books symposium of March 2000, marking the tenth anniversary of FIRST THINGS, did not purport to be a list of the best of anything. Contributors were invited to discuss any book they wished, and for whatever reason; whether because it was the best or the worst or simply because it caught their fancy.

The subject of lists comes to mind because the University of Chicago has recently reprinted in a handsome paperback Harry V. Jaffa's *Crisis of the House Divided.* Were I to succumb to an invitation to nominate the most important books ever written on the American experiment, there is no doubt that I would include this classic, which first appeared in 1959. The centerpiece of the book is the Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858, but it is more than a historical study. Jaffa believes—correctly, in my judgment—that in those debates were joined the great questions of the American founding, and the later working out of that founding. His vindication of Lincoln is the more persuasive because he does his utmost to be fair to Douglas and his argument for "popular sovereignty." Douglas contended that the question of slavery in the new territories should be left to popular vote and was no business of the federal government. Lincoln insisted that the Founders, while they compromised the question in order to form the Union, intended that slavery should be on "a course to ultimate extinction."

To leave slavery to popular sentiment, he said, would result in the extension of slavery, and imperil the freedom of all. His fear was made the more urgent and immediate by the Dred Scott decision of 1857, which declared that the Constitution "expressly affirmed" a right to hold slaves as property. Jaffa convincingly depicts Lincoln not only as an astute politician and statesman but also as a moral philosopher of no little achievement. *Crisis of the House Divided* has a sharp polemical edge, for at the time there were numerous revisionist historians—including both Southern apologists and Northern liberals—who were taking the side of Douglas and casting Lincoln as either a knave or fool who was prepared to risk war in order to advance his own political ambitions. In the course of his telling of the story, Jaffa offers striking observations on what was at stake. For instance, on how Lincoln and his legacy contributed to a development of doctrine from the Declaration of Independence, Jaffa has this to say:

> Lincoln's morality then extends the full length of Jefferson's, but it also goes further. Jefferson's horizon, with its grounding in Locke, saw all commands to respect the rights of others as fundamentally hypothetical imperatives: if you do not wish to be a slave, then refrain from being a master. Lincoln agreed, but he also said in substance: he who wills freedom for himself must simultaneously will freedom for others. Lincoln's imperative was not only hypothetical; it was categorical as well. Because all men by nature have an equal right to justice, all men have an equal duty to do justice, wholly irrespective of calculations as to self-interest. Or, to put it a little differently, our own happiness, our own welfare, cannot be conceived apart from our well-doing, or just action, and this well-doing is not merely the adding to our own security but the benefiting of others. Civil society for Lincoln, as for Aristotle and Burke, is a partnership "in every virtue and in all perfection." And, while our duties to friends and fellow citizens take precedence over duties to those who are not friends or fellow citizens, the possibility of justice, and of injustice, exists in every relationship with every other human being. Indeed, if it was not possible to do justice to non-fellow citizens, the possibility of justice and friendship with fellow citizens would not exist. For civil society is the realization of a

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> potentiality which must exist whenever man encounters his fellow, or it is not a potentiality anywhere. And that potentiality, for Lincoln, found its supreme expression in the proposition that "all men are created equal."

These questions are of much more than historical interest. Today, among both Protestant and Catholic writers, there are those who claim that the American founding was thoroughly secularist, and even atheistic, in its presuppositions, and is therefore incompatible with Christian truth—whether that truth be described as "Bible law" (Protestant) or St. Augustine's City of God (Catholic). I believe Jaffa, too, tends to exaggerate the role of Jefferson in the founding, and therefore the degree to which the philosophy of Hobbes and Locke dominated the ideas that informed the Revolution, as well as the writing and ratification of the Constitution. Be that as it may, Jaffa is surely correct in describing the development that Lincoln forced to explicit expression:

> And we cannot help noticing that the Lockean interpretation of unalienable rights, which we have sketched, ultimately views such rights as reducible to passions. For the right to life and liberty is held to be indefeasible in Locke just because the passion for life, and for the necessary means thereto, is held to be indefeasible. But when Lincoln said, as he repeatedly did say in the debates, that Douglas' "Don't care" policy with respect to slavery was an absurdity, because it tolerated the notion that there was such a thing as a right to do wrong, he superimposed upon the Lockean doctrine of the unalienable right to liberty a very different conception of right. The Lockean idea of a right to liberty meant that no one can consistently appeal to my sense of right to give up my liberty, but it does not mean that a man who enslaves another violates the enslaver's sense of what is right. Lincoln confounds the meaning of a right, meaning an indefeasible desire or passion, with what is right, meaning an objective state or condition in which justice is done.

It is perhaps obvious to note that the issues joined in the Lincoln-Douglas debates have the most direct relevance to the contemporary clash over abortion, just as the words and logic of *Dred Scott* strikingly parallel the words and logic of *Roe v. Wade* and its judicial progeny. As Lincoln said of slavery, so it must today be said of abortion, that the only morally coherent course is the course toward its ultimate extinction. As he declared that judicial efforts to outlaw that course were null and void, so today we must make clear that we are neither obliged nor intimidated by courts that arrogantly substitute their judgment for that of the elected representatives of the people and make a mockery of the indefeasible right to life, without which our constitutional order is built on sand. We have today many political leaders who are committed to the goal of "every unborn child protected in law and welcomed in life." But we have very few who are willing or able to make the case for the essential connection between "right" and "what is right" as Lincoln did in his debates with Douglas. For understanding the nature of the moral and political conflict in which we are engaged, there are few better places to start than with a careful reading of Harry V. Jaffa's *Crisis of the House Divided.*

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# To Choose and Be Chosen

There are Christians who are convinced that they believe and preach an "old time gospel" that is unchanged from the time of the New Testament, and there is merit in that if one understands *the* gospel to be Jesus Christ who is "the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). But in fact the old time gospel—which is a new time phrase invented by American revivalism—was given form by the ponderings, disputes, and decisions of Church fathers, councils, theologians, reformers, and popes over the centuries. There is a striking similarity between religious fundamentalists who deny the development of doctrine and theorists of secularization who claim that any accommodation by religion to its surrounding culture is a deviation from its earlier "orthodoxy." Both are fundamentalists; both subscribe to an idea of religion frozen in time. Orthodoxy, however, is a living tradition in both conversation and conflict with its surrounding worlds. In a fine formulation usually attributed to church historian Jaroslav Pelikan—although he says he got it from he knows not where—such tradition is the living faith of the dead, as distinct from traditionalism, which is the dead faith of the living. Orthodoxy is a work in progress under the sign of eschatological promise.

The prophets of secularization, however, have still other objections to what I have been describing in

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this space as the incorrigible nature of Christian America. It is said, for instance, that the quality of religious commitment is radically changed in a secular and pluralistic society. Faith and commitment, according to this view, were more secure and certain when people lived under a "sacred canopy" in societies where religion was a matter of *ascription* rather than *choice*. It used to be that your religion was, so to speak, part of the core curriculum of your life; now everything, including religion, is an elective. Where religion is ascribed, it comes as a package of more or less arbitrary factors assigned by virtue of one's birth or family; in a world of choice everything is up for grabs. Upon closer examination, however, it may be that the replacement of ascription by choice works more to the advantage of religion than of secularization.

Sociologist Christian Smith of the University of North Carolina writes: "For moderns—perhaps especially modern Americans—the ultimate criterion of identity and lifestyle validity is individual choice. It is by choosing a product, a mate, a lifestyle, or an identity that one makes it one's very own, personal, special, and meaningful—not 'merely' something one inherits or assumes." By choice, it is thought, I make something truly my own. The literary critic Lionel Trilling wrote in scathing terms about the modern cult of "sincerity and authenticity." In a similar vein, Alasdair MacIntyre critiques "modern emotivism," by which he means a disposition that reduces morality to a matter of individual "values." Values, in turn, are created by whatever I happen to choose to value, with the result that the only truth that is discussible is what is "true for me" or "true for you." Christian Smith, who wants to make the case that the modern ascendancy of choice strengthens religion, offers the piquant proposal that, in the absence of a sacred canopy, believers get along quite well with their "sacred umbrellas." That is a suggestive image, but it tends to reinforce the idea of religion as something individualistic, private, and subcultural. The arbitrariness of a traditional religion of ascription is replaced by what appears to be the equal arbitrariness of individual choice.

## *Not Under My Control*

In the biblical tradition, one might argue, it is not a matter of choosing but of being chosen. Clearly, God takes the initiative in choosing Abraham and his descendants, and keeps on choosing them even when they do not choose to be chosen. So also Jesus tells the disciples, "You have not chosen me but I have chosen you" (John 15:16). Yet the choice, so to speak, between choosing and being chosen is not so stark as it might seem. While the initiative lies with God, faith responds by choosing to be chosen. Such a response is not MacIntyre's emotivism; it is not simply an assertion of individual preference. It is the acknowledgment of a decision having been made that is not under my control.

Thus the relationship between the traditional role of ascription and the modern role of choice is seen to be considerably more subtle than some have suggested. The believer is not just putting up his little sacred umbrella but is acknowledging his part in a world that is indeed under a sacred canopy of divine purpose. While the commitment to that purpose is intensely personal, it is not individualistic but communal. To choose to be chosen is to accept one's part in the community of the chosen; for Jews, that means the children of Israel, and for Christians the Church. The common and deserved polemic against individual*ism* must not be permitted to obscure biblical religion's insistence upon the importance of the individual, understood as the dignity of the human person. Modernity's stress upon choice can be debased in a way that turns everything, including religion, into a consumer product that "meets my needs." It can also, however, accentuate my *responsibility* for choosing to be chosen, for deciding which community claims my allegiance. The subtlety of the relationship between ascription and choice is caught in the aphorism of Goethe: "What you have as heritage, / Take now as task; / For thus you will make it your own."

Rather than pitting ascription against choice, my ascription is my choice. The German word for gift, *Gabe*, is closely related to the word for task, *Aufgabe*. Whether choice is understood as individualistic preference or as communal allegiance, the modern accent on choice would seem to work more in favor of religion than of secularization. Certainly the forms of Christianity available to contemporary Americans appeal to both individualistic and communal sensibilities, along lines that are commonly, if somewhat too simply, demarcated as Protestant or Catholic. Whether one chooses to be part of an association of people holding up their sacred umbrellas (Protestant) or part of an ecclesial community that presents itself as the sacred canopy encompassing all of reality (Catholic), the act of choice is not antithetical to, but is an essential component of, religious adherence.

## *"An Age of Transition"*

The vitality of religion in America invites the questioning of many conventions in the way people have thought about modernity and secularization.

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Two terms that have played a large part in these discussions over the years are *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. Briefly stated, *Gemeinschaft* is the solidarity of traditional community, religious and otherwise, where people "belong" at the deepest level of their being, where the answers to the big questions are a given transmitted from generation to generation, and where personal identity is bestowed. *Gesellschaft*, on the other hand, is the modern circumstance in which human relations are rational, instrumental, and directed to specific ends. It is the world of bureaucracy, rules, and impersonal interactions aimed at maximizing individual advantage. In this view, *Gemeinschaft* is religion-friendly, while *Gesellschaft* is the companion and agent of a world disenchanted and desacralized.

We should be skeptical, however, about whether things have changed as much as some theorists suggest, or whether they have changed in the ways they suggest. Recall again Adam's remark to Eve on the way out of the garden, "My dear, we live in an age of transition." Of course life is change and many things are different, but are the basic bonds of family, friendship, common origins, and kinship that much weaker today? Surely the society of *Gesellschaft* is much more complex, and there are layers upon layers of structures that were not there before, but one may suggest that they are erected upon a substratum of fundamental relationships that we associate with *Gemeinschaft*. For instance, the intensified threat of depersonalized and disenchanted structures may actually drive people to religion rather than away from it. Precisely as the surrounding world becomes more disenchanted and deprived of sacred meaning, the felt need increases to form communities that make sense of individual and corporate life.

A limited analogy (all analogies are limited) may be drawn with marriage. Is marriage stronger or weaker today than it was, say, a hundred years ago? One answer is given by citing the divorce rates. When more than a third of first marriages end in divorce, it would seem obvious that marriage is weaker today. At the same time, the argument can be made that marriage is stronger today in the sense that people expect more of it. Because they have unreasonably high expectations of marriage, they are disappointed and end up divorcing. But they end up divorcing only to marry again, and usually more successfully. The dynamic here is both paradoxical and perverse; because people invest so much in marriage, they demand so much from it; indeed they demand more than many marriages can deliver. A few people go on from marriage to marriage in search of their ideal of marriage. Many more decide to "play it safe" by being married without the formality of marriage—what used to be called, and is still sometimes called, common-law marriage. Yet others come to recognize that marriage is an institution and not an emotion; that the commitment to the relationship cannot be calculatingly contingent upon the satisfactions derived from it. At that point, as innumerable married couples testify, the satisfactions greatly increase.

As I say, the analogy is limited, but nonetheless instructive. From what we might call the "megaperspective" of modern rationalized explanation, the world is disenchanted and desacralized. In response to such a world, human beings flee to institutions of marriage and the family that are, in the phrase of the late Christopher Lasch, "a haven in a heartless world." So also does the attraction of communities of religious meaning increase. We can view these, too, as sheltered enclaves or as little sacred umbrellas with which we desperately ward off the threat of "the real world." But, once again, when the religion in question is Christianity something very different may be happening. Christianity provides an alternative definition of what constitutes "the real world." It is, in the mind of many of its adherents, a much more reasonable and convincing definition of reality than those provided by secularism's reductive rationality, materialism, or embrace of absurdity. But is it not also for many Christians a haven in a heartless world, a sheltered enclave, or a sacred umbrella held in the trembling hands of those seeking protection from what they suspect really is the real world? Yes, certainly. But the point is that the modern circumstance may be more conducive to religion than to secularism, whether that religion is "escapist" or is a boldly asserted redefinition of the real world.

## *Plural Pluralisms*

We frequently hear it said that ours is a pluralistic society, and therefore inhospitable to religious commitment. In fact, in textbooks from grade school through graduate school, the two terms are often combined: "We live in an increasingly pluralistic and secular society." The implication, often made explicit, is that society must be secular because it is pluralistic. Sometimes the point is that the social fact of pluralism requires giving up differences that make too much of a difference, especially religious differences. If they are not given up, they must be confined to the private sphere where they have no social consequence. This is one understanding of pluralism: the ignoring or denying of the differences that make the deepest

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difference. Another understanding of pluralism is that of a lively interaction of differences in tension, sometimes in conflict, and always in the hope of mutual enrichment.

That second understanding of pluralism has in recent decades achieved a certain cachet in liberal thought and practice. The once mayor of New York David Dinkins spoke of "the gorgeous mosaic" that has presumably replaced the earlier image of the American melting pot. Vice President Al Gore's gaffe has been much remarked, when he translated *e pluribus unum* as "out of the one, many." The acknowledgment of difference, indeed the celebration of difference, is most importantly evident in race relations, where the earlier ideal of black and white integration is replaced by the "identity politics" of African-Americanism. The celebration of pluralism in the general media and in policies aimed at "inclusiveness" typically extends to race, gender, class, and sexual orientation, but not to religion. Yet the reality of pluralism—the fact of people living in different worlds of moral and spiritual meaning—is also conducive to the strengthening of religious identities.

Such pluralism is most intensively experienced in cities. Just as earlier theories assumed that there is a connection between pluralism and secularization, so it was commonly claimed that urbanization undermines religious adherence and is therefore a major force in secularization. But precisely the opposite argument can also be made. New York City, for example, is a world of many worlds. It is a veritable hothouse of alternative lifestyles, subcultures, belief systems, and structures of communal cohesion. The stereotypical story line is the person coming from a small town to the big city in search of liberation from the confining mores and conformity of his past. In the great metropolis, it is said, we are free to be ourselves. Alternatively, it is said that in the city we enter into the freedom of a kind of universal existence that is unconstricted by the particularities from which we escaped.

At the same time, however, the experienced reality of the city is not that of a universalism but of a flourishing of parochialisms—from the mandatory liberalism of the Upper West Side, to the gay subculture of the West Village, to the ethnic familialism of Bensonhurst, to the wondrous potpourri of immigrant Elmhurst in Queens. In short, a world of many worlds, including worlds of religious belief, practice, and communal cohesion. The escape from the small town to the city is not from parochialism to cosmopolitanism but from the parochialism that oppresses to the parochialism that fits. "Parochial," one notes, is related to "parish," and the attraction of urban life is that you get to choose your parish.

### *Wishy-Washy Defectors*

How is it, then, that America can, at the same time, be so modern and so religious? That is the question we have been considering. We have looked briefly at some of the theories of the last century that assumed a necessary connection between modernity and secularization, and have discovered that the connection can work in exactly the opposite direction from that assumed by secularization theorists. Yes, some may object, but what about all those people who are not religious? Whether in the suburb or small town or urban center, one need not go far to find a large number of people who seem to all appearances not to be religious at all. Moreover, they describe themselves as nonreligious. Isn't this evidence of secularization? Maybe, and maybe not.

We have already referred to the work of sociologist Christian Smith. In a recent national survey whose findings are consistent with much other survey research, he discovered that 9 percent of Americans describe themselves as "nonreligious," meaning that they were raised to be but are not now religious. Upon closer examination, however, Smith discovered that 80 percent of these people did not mean that they had rejected religious beliefs, or even all religious practices. Certainly they had not suffered a "collapse of religious plausibility structures" (early Peter Berger) and, as a consequence, adopted naturalistic or secular worldviews. Rather, what they mean by saying that they are nonreligious is that they do not go to church, and in many cases have developed negative attitudes toward churches and clergy.

Yet 60 percent emphatically say that they believe in God and pray to Him often, and that the God to whom they pray is the same God in whom they were taught to believe in childhood. Less than 20 percent of that nonreligious 9 percent say they do not believe in God at all. Some of the "nonreligious" expressed gratitude to the researchers for bringing the matter to their attention, and resolved to put their religious life in order. Smith writes: "The vast majority of our religious 'defectors,' in other words, had not forsaken their religious worldviews and belief commitments and become secularized unbelievers. These [respondents] who identified themselves as 'not religious' are not literally not-religious. They simply had stopped participating in the worship services of organized religion, which is quite a different matter."

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Smith's conclusion deserves to be read in full. The survey research, he says, suggests three things:

> First, very few "nonreligious" Americans are truly nonreligious—most in fact insist they *are* religious, but simply in a rather individualistic, disaffiliated way. Second, the primary basis of most people's distance from organized religion typically has little to do with cognitive belief implausibility, per se; rather, distance from religion appears to be generated more by relational disruptions and the absence of strong relational ties to religion. Third, modernity itself does not appear to be the *driving force at work undermining strong* religious faith and practice; the primary reasons why religious defectors in contemporary America do not participate in organized religion *are probably not very different from the kinds of reasons that would have estranged people from organized religion throughout human history* (emphasis added).

### *Faith and Credulity*

Smith's last point brings us back to Andrew Greeley's thought experiment in *Unsecular Man.* It may be that the on-the-ground social reality is that our time warrants the appellation "the age of faith" as much as, say, the thirteenth century. The later Peter Berger published *A Distant Glory* with the subtitle, "the quest for faith in an age of credulity." The suggested distinction is between authentic faith and unreflective credulity, which is a distinction that all of us would want to maintain, while recognizing that our faith and what we view as our neighbor's credulity are equally religious. The fact is that relatively few people are trained philosophers or social theorists. They do not fit the intellectual's model of the modern who operates by "the hermeneutics of suspicion." Were they sociologists of religion, they might be keenly aware of the "cognitive dissonance" between their religious beliefs and their secular pursuits, but they are not.

This is not to say that the mental framework of their religious beliefs is unproblematic. Rather, they adhere to religion because it provides identity, fellowship, meaning, order, and a promise of purpose. A philosopher friend tells me, "I am a Christian because Christianity makes more sense of more facts than any other way of construing reality that I know of." Since they are not philosophers, most people would not put it quite that way, but that would seem to be the gist of the matter. People experience problems, dissonances, puzzles, and confusions in what they believe, but these do not undermine what they believe. More often than not, it seems, such problems prompt them to explore more carefully, and adhere more closely to, their faith.

If religion is conceived as a product to be marketed, America historically has been, is now, and will likely be even more so in the future a bull market. The sociologists of religion who operate by the model of the competitive market have very impressively made their case against older theories of secularization. Religion as a consumer product is not necessarily an edifying phenomenon, nor is it an adequate way of understanding "Christian America Confused" and "Christian America Conflicted." The *modern, pluralistic, market-driven society* is conducive to the flourishing of religion as a subculture—or, better, as a maddening array of subcultures. But the phrase "Christian America" suggests not a subculture but a culture. It is not uncommon today to read that we should abandon the notion that there is an American culture. America, it is said, is now a nation of subcultures. We all live now not in a culture but in a subculture, or in several subcultures. To the extent that is true, the amalgam of subcultures that we call American is in fact the culture of Christian America—incorrigible, confused, and conflicted.

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## While We're At It

■ I have no idea who or what Joanne Rowling had in mind when in her Harry Potter books she called the ordinary and non-magical world the Muggle world, but she surely could not have been thinking of the Muggletonians, who appear to have been anything but ordinary. Here is the dustjacket description from a new book from Oxford University Press, edited by T. L. Underwood, *The Acts of the Witnesses: The Autobiography of Lodowick Muggleton and Other Early Muggletonian Writings*: "The middle decades of the seventeenth century in England were marked by political and religious turmoil that included civil war, the execution of the king, the abolition of monarchy and episcopacy, and the establishment of a republican government with increased, yet limited, religious toleration. Over the past quarter century, scholars have developed particular interest in the more radical religious movements that arose in this tumultuous period, including Quakers, Seekers,

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Ranters, and Muggletonians. Drawing on material from a newly discovered archive, this book presents writings produced by the last group, an unusual sect founded in 1652 by John Reeve and Lodowick Muggleton. The Muggletonians are of special interest because they differ so dramatically from other religious groups of this time. Claiming that they were the last two witnesses of Revelation 11:3, Reeve and Muggleton acted as ultimate religious authorities on earth, blessing some people to eternal happiness and cursing others to everlasting damnation. Following Reeve's death in 1658, Muggleton became sole leader of the movement that eventually took his name. Muggletonians were noted for their emphasis on Reeve and Muggleton's authority (Muggleton claimed to 'stand in God's place'), their conception of God as a man between five and six feet tall who reigned in heaven some six miles above the earth, and the fact that their religious services consisted not of prayers and preachings, but of eating, drinking, singing, and discussing religious views in a local alehouse or home. Partly because they were not evangelistic, their numbers were never large, and by the twentieth century they were thought to be extinct. In the 1970s, however, Philip Noakes of Kent was identified as the 'last Muggletonian' and keeper of the group's archive, which was acquired subsequently by the British Library." One thought is that if Harry Potter and his friends finally take over, there may one day be a book based on papers supplied by the last Muggle. My second thought, however, is that that would be a pity. There is a great deal to be said for a Muggle world that produces such as the Muggletonians. Give me theological bull sessions in an alehouse and I'll forgo the magic.

■ According to a nationwide survey, almost nine out of ten (85 percent) of black Americans describe themselves as "happy," three out of four (72 percent) think of themselves as "successful," and half (50 percent) say they are "financially comfortable." Blacks are also much more ostensibly religious than the general population. The top-rated (94 percent) goal in life is to have a close, personal relationship with God. That goal is rated above, for instance, good health or living comfortably. Ninety-two percent say they are "absolutely certain" that in times of crisis they can count on God answering their prayers. They are also substantially more likely to believe that the Bible is totally accurate in all that it says. George Barna, head of the organization that conducted the research, says, "Placing the profile of whites and blacks side by side is like looking at people from different sides of the planet. While whites tend to be self-reliant, blacks are more likely to rely on God. Whites persevere on the basis of their drive to achieve, blacks on the basis of their faith." These differences explain, says Barna, why efforts at black-white reconciliation so often fail. "Whites are trying to bring about reconciliation based on a white view of reality and within the context of white lifestyles and goals." The data are not uninteresting, although the generalizations drawn may be dubious. A sense of personal responsibility, one might argue, can be grounded in reliance on God, and the drive to achieve can be sustained and informed by faith. But that's an argument for another day.

■ Pictures in *Charisma*, a magazine of pentecostal enthusiasms, show people pulling back their cheeks to expose teeth that the Holy Spirit allegedly fixed with gold fillings. Martin E. Marty reminds us that when televangelist Jimmy Swaggart was starting out he reacted memorably to such claims. He asked why God would use gold. Wouldn't he fill teeth with teeth?

■ Counterintuitive may be the word for the contention of Krishan Kumar, an English sociologist visiting at the University of Virginia, that Americans have what the English lack—a sense of national identity. With the Welsh and the Scots breaking away, and the Irish never included, plus the European Union making noises like a nation, it is becoming more of a problem. Kumar says, "I think the clue to the English is their imperial past. I'm finding increasingly interesting the comparisons between England and Russia. Both the Russians and the English have had huge empires, and they buried themselves in their empires without having to think very much about who they were separately from the empires. Further, the English and the Russians have had strong state traditions and their identities have come as often as not from the state—the monarchy, the Tsar—and usually in tandem with a state church—the Church of England, the Russian Orthodox church. There hasn't really been a stress on the people or 'the nation.' In the United States, by contrast, the society has been much more closely identified with 'the people' (not in an ethnic sense, but in a civic one). This has meant that the same kinds of questions that were asked in classic nationalist movements: Who are we? Where did we come from? Where are we going? have already been asked in America, but far less so in England and Russia, until relatively recently, anyway." Kumar does not say, but I expect he would agree, that the identity question for Russians was also postponed for seventy years by a Soviet empire with a quasi-religious

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ideology that answered, at least for many, the anxiety, Who are we?

■ In Central Florida there is this billboard campaign that has, so to speak, God speaking to motorists. "We need to talk," says one. Another, in a mode more stern, "Don't make me come down there." Yet another, "Do you think it's hot *here*?" Then there is the downright threatening, "Keep using my name in vain, I'll make rush hour longer." Our old friend, the *Nicotine Theological Journal*, is not amused, noting that "taking God's name in vain entails, among other sins, the perversion of God's Word in profane jesting. . . . When the wages of sin is, well, a traffic jam, haven't we lowered the stakes just a tad below hellfire and brimstone?" That may be a bit too heavy. While the line between kitsch and blasphemy may be hard to draw, the cutesy billboard messages undoubtedly trivialize the biblical understanding of God, pandering to "the man upstairs" mentality that makes near impossible an awareness either of divine judgment or of divine mercy. I expect there are some perfectly sincere folk in Florida who earnestly believe that they are recruiting contemporary advertising techniques to the service of God's word. They should think again.

■ So you want to be a millionaire? One way might be to become a Christian Scientist, if the Church of Christ, Scientist, divvied up its mega-endowments among its handful of members. But they don't, and are not about to. The leadership does use the church's considerable resources to sponsor lurches increasingly leftward on the political spectrum. Here, for instance, is an article on "human rights and divine law" in the *Christian Science Journal*. The author, Elise L. Moore, is explaining why divine law requires affirmative action and quota systems, allowing that "what seems logical from one perspective is onerous and unjust from another." Her example is the Pharaoh ordering that all male babies of the Hebrews be killed. "What to the Egyptians seemed a social and political necessity was to the Hebrews the epitome of racial, religious, and gender prejudice." Go down Moses, said the Lord, for they are committing racial, religious, and gender prejudice. I am sure Ms. Moore does not mean to suggest that the last offense might have been remedied by killing all the female babies as well. (This may be a first. I don't think I've ever commented on the Church of Christ, Scientist, in this space. I promise not to make a habit of it.)

■ The cultural corrosiveness of capitalism is a perennial subject, and sensibly so. Although it is not always addressed sensibly. Henry A. Giroux offers a distinctly leftist take on the subject in *The Mouse That Roared: Disney and the End of Innocence* (Rowman and Littlefield). Kenneth Anderson of American University reviews the book in the *Times Literary Supplement*, observing that "it is hard to resist the conclusion that Disney and predominant corporate America stand for a certain corporatist form of liberal politics and moderately progressive cultural views. Corporate America, especially those companies which produce consumer goods that depend upon culture, fashion, and advertising to sell them, is plainly not culturally conservative, as least not as that term is understood by American cultural conservatives; the American corporation freely inculcates progressive views, particularly in the matter of identity politics of race and gender, and tolerance and diversity, at the box office. How could corporate America be culturally conservative, when the only ironclad law of marketing is, and always will be, that sex sells? Giroux wants to say that, merely because it is not culturally conservative, it is not thereby 'progressive' in Giroux's sense, and that *that*, finally, is its real failing. Still, it seems somewhat churlish of Giroux to go on insisting, on behalf of leftist cultural politics, that its efforts are merely a sop and do not go far enough; a more clear-sighted observer, coming perhaps from the cultural right, might have thought, rather, that Disney had offered to do a great deal of Giroux's work for him and that he might be more properly grateful." That having been said, Anderson is far from persuaded that matters would be improved by further fetters on the market. He concludes: "But if the alternative is for Giroux's—or Pat Buchanan's or Al Gore's or George W. Bush's—State to instruct us on what else to fill [public space] with, which is the strong if dangling implication of *The Mouse That Roared*, then we are better off as we are. One arrives at certain forms of libertarianism without enthusiasm, but as merely the least bad alternative."

■ Charles Murray, author, with Richard Herrnstein, of *The Bell Curve*, says he is still puzzled by the outrage of the left against their claim that there are inherent differences between the races in IQ and other factors bearing on one's chances in life. After all, such a claim can be employed to advocate an expanded government role in equalizing life outcomes. Now Murray writes in "Deeper into the Brain" that we are facing a "neurogenetic revolution" in which biological factors will be discovered and made manipulatable not only relative to race and sex but also to many other group differences, such as those distinguishing "the

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English from the French, employed Swedes from unemployed Swedes, observant Christians from lapsed ones, and people who collect stamps from people who backpack." Eugenics, he says, "is in disrepute because of Nazism," but an older left—such as that of the Fabians and, he might have added, the Rockefeller Foundation—made no bones about the need for government policies that would encourage the lower classes to have fewer children and the better classes more. "The only difference," he writes, "will be that the old eugenicists had to rely on a rough statement ('the lower classes') whereas eugenicists of the future will be able to be more precise ('people with the following genetic profiles')." In response to Mr. Murray's puzzlement about the left, it might be noted that the utopian left must assume a literal and inherent equality among people if unhappy inequalities are to be blamed upon "the system," thereby justifying the ambition to revolutionize the system. But, as Murray notes, there has been another stream of the left—abetted by many who think of themselves as conservatives—that despairs of the "inferior" and "defective" and believes they must be contained, reduced in number, or eliminated. This touches on what Murray has elsewhere called the growth of "custodial democracy," and on the much-discussed question of whether Nazism was a phenomenon of the left or the right. "I confess to a certain optimism," says Murray, about the neurogenetic revolution and the prospect of our deciding to redesign Homo sapiens. "One of the main reasons that couples have babies is to produce *their* baby, the product of their combined genes. . . . The popular voluntary uses of gene manipulation are likely to be ones that avoid birth defects and ones that lead to improved overall physical and mental abilities. I find it hard to get upset about that prospect." That may well be true of the popular and voluntary aspects of the revolution, but Murray wisely acknowledges that his thoughts "are the ruminations of a twentieth-century man, destined to look as myopic a century from now as the predictions of nineteenth-century men about the twentieth." Some who have thought about these matters in the past were not so very myopic. See, for instance, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, as discussed by Leon Kass in the March issue.

■ The journal *Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity* reports that researchers from Stanford and Duquesne universities have concluded that at least 200,000 Americans are "cyber-sex compulsives." Compulsivity, as it is called, is defined as visiting pornographic web sites for eleven or more hours per week. Why eleven? Presumably ten hours per week can be excused as curiosity or occasional indulgence. Eleven is over the top. As Chesterton said, morality finally comes down to drawing a line somewhere.

■ Bill Mahan of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, sent this item along and says it represents the decline from "Christian granite to social service gravel." That's not a bad way of putting it. The item is the newsletter of the YWCA of Greater Harrisburg. On the back page it carries the organization's mission statement of 1900 under the heading THAT WAS THEN (in old English type). The statement reads: "We, the Young Women's Christian Association of Harrisburg, a member of the Young Women's Christian Association of the United States of America, declare our purpose to be: To build a fellowship of women and girls devoted to the task of realizing in our common life those ideals of personal and social living to which we are committed by our faith as Christians. In this endeavor we seek to understand Jesus, to share his love for all people, and to grow in the knowledge and love of God." Then, under the heading THIS IS NOW (modern sans serif) there is the mission statement of 2000: "The YWCA of Greater Harrisburg emphasizes the empowerment of women and children by providing quality services designed to maximize their spiritual, emotional, educational, and physical development. It is committed to eliminating racism, sexism, and any other barrier or prejudice that impedes personal growth. It actively serves as an advocate and a resource to the community on issues that impact women and children." The poignant fact is that the people who write such stuff are almost certainly sincere in believing that it represents progress.

■ "The freedom of the Church," meaning the ability of the Catholic Church to govern its own affairs, is hard-won. Only in the past century did Rome disentangle itself from sundry compromises with earthly states that claimed, for instance, the right to appoint or veto Rome's appointment of bishops. Such conflicts go way back, for example to the great Investiture Controversy between Pope Gregory VII and King Henry IV of Germany, featuring the latter's standing in the snow at Canossa begging for absolution in 1077. Today the Chinese regime defies the authority of Rome by appointing bishops to the Patriotic Church, and there is no Canossa in sight. On June 29, 1996, at the Jesuit house in Oxford, John Quinn, retired archbishop of San Francisco, delivered a lecture much celebrated by progressive Catholics. He called for the "devolution" of ecclesial authority away from Rome and to local and national

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churches. Now the lecture has become a book, *The Reform of the Papacy* (Crossroad). (See FT review by Avery Dulles, June/July.) Veteran Catholic observer Russell Shaw notes that many of the subjects of reform included in the original lecture—priestly celibacy, divorce, remarriage, the ordination of women, etc.—are missing from the book. The idea of devolution (or "subsidiarity" in the Church) is still central, however. In fact, in his 1995 encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* (That They May be One), John Paul II asked for reflection, especially from Orthodox and Protestant churches, on how the exercise of the papal office might better serve Christian unity. Of course, Archbishop Quinn and others have every right to join the discussion. Shaw writes: "As the discussion proceeds, however, we need to keep in view the threats to Church unity that now exist not only in China but in the West. Progressive Catholics urging devolution don't mean to damage ecclesial communion, but since when did people anticipate and intend all the consequences of what they do? 'There is a legitimate and necessary place . . . for discussion of what is prudent at a given time in history,' Archbishop Quinn said at Oxford. About that, he couldn't be more right."

■ Although there are likely still homes where his picture hangs beside that of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, John F. Kennedy, to put it gently, turned out to be a severe disappointment to Catholics who were so excited about having one of their own in the White House. Ralph McInerny of Notre Dame is prompted to reflection by a book on Robert Kennedy: "Ronald Steel's new book on Bobby, *In Love With Night*, is chiefly concerned with showing that the younger brother was not as liberal as people thought, but then neither was the older brother. Both were sons of their father, after all. Whether the Kennedy brothers were liberal or conservative is not something one would fret too much about. It is their total secularization that is striking. They privatized their faith before any court suggested they should. Nor does it seem to have been a conscious, dramatic deed, however private. Being Catholic seems to have meant a plus or minus with the electorate and not much else. Father Andrew Greeley sometimes seems to suggest that we are all Kennedy Catholics now. All those beliefs and practices are negotiable, nothing that should bring us into collision with our fellow Americans. Now we divorce and abort and misbehave like everyone else—or so we are told. Sometimes I feel like Senator Grassley of Iowa, who, when told on one of the ineffable talk shows that everyone lies about sex, was dumbfounded. 'I don't!' he cried, thereby becoming the butt of jokes. He, it was laughingly said, had nothing to lie about. How sophisticated we've become. But, of course, the laugh is on us."

■ I don't say there aren't too many lobbyists in Washington, although it is hard to know how many would be just the right number. And I confess to being more than a little skeptical about all the agitation for "campaign finance reform." Money will always be in search of political influence, and will likely always find a path to it. A strong contender for the looniest idea of this political season is that, since government is corrupted by campaign financing, government should be put in control of campaign financing. (Ask the scandal-hit Christian Democrats in Germany, which has some of the strictest campaign finance laws in the world.) As to the excessive influence of lobbies, Chester E. Finn offers some incisive observations in his review of *The Paradox of American Democracy: Elites, Special Interests, and the Betrayal of the Public Trust* by John B. Judis of the *New Republic*, a child of 1960s radicalism who would like to see it revived to challenge the "vested interests" clustered on K Street. Finn writes: "The picture, however, is not so simple. When does a worthy cause become a vested interest? When does a guardian of one's own welfare turn into a 'lobbyist'? And are lobbyists per se really a bad thing? After all, ours is a large and complex polity in which nobody can possibly represent himself in every forum or personally monitor the positions and votes of every elected official. By closely tracking affairs of state on behalf of our interests and enthusiasms, effective lobbyists, it might be argued, enable the rest of us to devote our energies to earning a living, raising a family, mowing the lawn, reading magazines, and making whoopee." Finn, who is one of the country's leading lights on education reform, goes on to note that there are lobbies, and then there are lobbies. "Without question, business is a powerful force in American politics. But it is by no means the only huge, policy-blocking concentration of power and self-interest in the land. In the field of education, for instance, it is not corporate America that keeps poor children trapped in rotten urban schools; it is, rather, mainly the teacher unions (the largest of which is headquartered not on K but on M Street in Washington), school-board associations, and myriad other groups that live off tax dollars." Judis argues that in recent decades conservative and neoconservative views, as distinct from "disinterested" liberal views, have been receiving too much attention in the media. Of Judis' argument that it is the job of the press to adjudicate between left and right by favoring the former and

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delegitimizing the latter, Finn observes in an aside, "It will surely come as news to many journalists that they have been remiss in their performance of this particular duty."

■ Buckets of ink have been spilt on the curious travels of "identity" through the cultural air that we breathe. This caught my eye the other day. It is Terry Golway's column in the *New York Observer* and he is writing about Tommy Makem, a very successful Irish folk singer who is worried that his people may sell out their legacy to the European Union. "There's nothing wrong with making money," says Mr. Makem, "but if you lose your identity in the process, you're gone forever." It is unmistakably reminiscent of another who said, "What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world. . . ." Is identity today's word for soul? For decades black musicians produced "soul music," a mix of racialism and gospel. Do you suppose Mr. Makem had the words of Jesus in mind when he spoke as he did? It would seem more than likely, although they may be indelibly imprinted at some level below (or above) his consciousness. "If you lose your identity, you're gone forever." Eternal loss? Damnation? Should Christians be pleased, however ambivalently, with an understanding of soul that situates the individual in a corporate reality, in this case the Gaelic heritage? One does not want to overread what may have been a casual remark by an entertainer, but it is another illustration of the difficulty in discerning whether something is vestigially Christian, a Christian appropriation of a new cultural sensibility, or something like a new cult of "identity" posited against Christianity.

■ One of the most striking differences between Protestant and Catholic clergy in parish ministry is that the former are typically bent on increasing the number of members while the latter are typically consumed by the tasks of serving the people they have. "If evangelizing means getting more people with a claim on my attention," a priest friend remarks more than half seriously, "I don't have time for it." This touches on many problems of both institution and attitude, and they are helpfully addressed by a new project in Seattle, the Catherine of Sienna Institute. The institute has published a thirty-five-page pamphlet, "The Parish: Mission or Maintenance? The Untapped Potential of the Parish in the Formation of Lay Apostles," by Father Michael Sweeney, O.P., and Sherry Ann Weddell. I imagine they would be glad to send a copy to anyone who asked for it, enclosing two dollars for their cost and trouble. (Catherine of Sienna Institute, 5050 8th Avenue NE, Seattle, Washington 98105.)

■ According to *Publishers Weekly*, Thomas Nelson has published a book by John Eldredge, *The Journey of Desire*, which argues that "Christianity is not an invitation to become a moral person." *PW* goes on to say, "Eldredge claims that a hunger for God, not an ethical reformation, should undergird Christianity." If ever one might indulge the cliché of something being both/and rather than either/or, this might be the occasion.

■ In a *Commonweal* cartoon, an aide says to the Senator: "You want to run a principled campaign? I'm afraid that gimmick's been tried already."

■ Conservatives generally favor tradition, but from time to time a decision must be made that a cause is lost. Those who adamantly decline making that decision are commonly called reactionaries. Evelyn Waugh, for delightful instance. "Requested by a British journalist to comment on the upcoming elections of 1959, Waugh responded, 'I have never voted in a parliamentary election. I shall not vote this year. . . . In the last three hundred years, particularly in the last hundred, the Crown has adopted what seems to me a very hazardous process of choosing advisers: popular election. Many great evils have resulted. . . . I do not aspire to advise my Sovereign in her choice of servants.'"

■ Religion columnist Dale Turner writes in the *Seattle Times* endorsing the "right to die," and the help of doctors in killing oneself. Nothing newsworthy in that, I suppose. The argument is familiar: "The quality of life is more important than mere length of life. Our cultural tradition holds that life has absolute value, but that is not really good enough anymore. Sometimes, no life would be better." It seems we'll just have to get a better cultural tradition. "God alone is not determining how long men and women shall live. Science and medicine now prolong the average span of life from in the thirties during early Colonial days to more than seventy now." For the umpteenth time one points out that the life expectancy of a healthy young adult in the seventeenth century is not all that different from that of a healthy young adult today. The dramatic change has been in infant and child mortality. Go check out the ages of death in any old cemetery. As to the claim that doctor-assisted suicide may lead to a general devaluation of human life, Turner endorses the view, "Nothing in life is to be feared. It is only to be understood." Right. Rape, cancer, war are not to be feared. They are only to be understood. "The right to die," says Turner, "has equal validity to the right to live." Not surprisingly,

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there is no evidence of Dale Turner's commitment, never mind equal commitment, to the unborn child's right to live.

■ "We will no longer permit the killing of our children." That's Marian Wright Edelman of the Children's Defense Fund speaking, it says here, as she pounded the table. She is not talking about abortion. The above statement is immediately followed by "We lose eighty-four preschool children a year to guns, four thousand kids a year." The adulatory cover story is puffing Edelman's new "Crusade for Children." Edelman, a long time ally of Hillary ("It Takes a Village") Clinton, who served on her organization's board, is a longtime advocate of a greatly expanded welfare state, government monopoly of education, and what is euphemistically called a woman's reproductive rights. The same issue includes an editorial endorsing Edelman's crusade and urging Christians to rally behind the educational philosophy of John Dewey. Oh yes, all this appears in the *National* Catholic *Reporter* (emphasis added).

■ "Mysterianism," permit me to suggest, is a word we can get along without. It occurs in a review of John Horgan's *The Undiscovered Mind* (Free Press) by John F. Haught, professor of theology at Georgetown. Haught notes that Horgan debunks, among other things, evolutionary psychology, an offshoot of E. O. Wilson's sociobiology. Horgan says evolutionary psychology is "a strangely inconsequential exercise." It offers Darwinian explanations for social and psychological phenomena, but it cannot demonstrate experimentally that that explanation is better than others. Horgan writes, "Like neuroscientists, researchers in evolutionary psychology and artificial intelligence are both bumping up against the Humpty Dumpty dilemma. They can break the mind into pieces, but they have no idea how to put it together again." Horgan is depressed by the thought that there appears to be a definitive limit to what scientific inquiry can tell us, and Haught thinks he shouldn't be. Maybe, says Haught, "the undiscovered mind" should be viewed as "an exhilarating doorway to infinite mystery, as it has been for the truly great philosophers of the past." Right. In Haught's otherwise thoughtful review, however, this slips in: "The fact that mind evades complete objectification is not a signal of its irreducibility to mechanics. Our mental freedom is probably illusory, for there must be unspecifiable physical factors that quietly 'cause' all of our decisions." Must be? Why? If reality truly participates in "infinite mystery," there is no reason why it should be captive to "causes," even in quotation marks. But let's not call this view mysterianism. Humility will do, or, even better, simple honesty.

■ The subject of reading or studying the Bible in public schools is a perennial. We have noted some recent initiatives in this connection, and it is obvious that readers are divided on the merits of trying to find some neutral way of treating the "Bible as literature." In 1950 C. S. Lewis delivered a lecture on "The Literary Impact of the Authorized Version," by which he meant, of course, the King James Version. He argued that the literary influence of the Bible was severely limited by its being so familiar. "This may sound paradoxical, but it is seriously meant. For three centuries, the Bible was so well known that hardly any word or phrase, except those which it shared with all English books whatever, could be borrowed without recognition. If you echoed the Bible everyone knew that you were echoing the Bible. And certain associations were called up in every reader's mind—sacred associations. All your readers had heard it read, as a ritual or almost ritual act, at home, at school, and in church. This did not mean that reverence prevented all biblical echoes. It did mean that they would only be used either with conscious reverence or with conscious irreverence, either religiously or facetiously. There could be a pious use and a profane use: but there would be no ordinary use. Nearly all that was biblical was recognizably biblical, and all that was recognized was *sacer*, numinous; whether on that account to be respected or on that account to be flouted makes very little difference. Mark what Boswell says under Sat. April 3d 1773: 'He [i.e., Dr. Johnson] disapproved of introducing scripture phrases into secular discourses. This seemed to me a question of some difficulty. A scripture expression may be used like a highly classical phrase to produce an instantaneous strong impression.' 'Like a highly classical phrase'—that is the point; and producing a strong impression. It is difficult to conceive conditions less favorable to that unobtrusive process of infiltration by which a profound literary influence usually operates. An influence which cannot evade our consciousness will not go very deep." In other words, literary influence insinuates itself; it does not hit the reader over the head. Lewis took note of the displacement of the KJV by new translations, a process then just getting underway but now almost totally triumphant. The Revised Standard Version (not the New RSV) and the New International Version preserve much of the cadence of the KJV, but less and less do we have a common biblical vocabulary. The result is that the Bible can less and less be read as literature, since literature is texts

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composed of specific words. The Bible's basic stories and images can be taught as history, since they are an inescapable part of our history. While much of contemporary pedagogy is set upon escaping from the inescapable, resistance to such unbounded liberationism is possible, and current efforts to promote Bible reading in the schools may be viewed as a resistance strategy. Those who understand that the Bible is to be read on its own terms of revelation and salvation history may well support such resistance strategies, but they will not expect too much from them in terms of spiritual benefit. Fifty years after Lewis' lecture, proposals for the reading and study of the Bible that are neutral toward the truth of the Bible are as unsatisfactory as ever, and as, I expect, they ever will be.

■ I don't know how many Christians have been influenced by *Blinded by Might: Can the Religious Right Save America?*, published last year by Zondervan. In that book, columnist Cal Thomas and Grand Rapids pastor Ed Dobson (who was associated with Moral Majority many years ago) excoriate the excesses of "the religious right," and that is a target-rich environment. Many have read the book, however, as a counsel of political despair. Christians should withdraw from the public square and cultivate their own gardens. Writing in *Touchstone*, James Hitchcock of St. Louis University takes Thomas and Dobson to task: "But here lies the book's most serious political failure, which is the authors' apparently having forgotten what they once knew—that the modern state will not let people alone, will not allow them to live simply as their beliefs dictate. The modern state more and more moves towards what has been aptly called soft totalitarianism, in which it claims authority over every aspect of people's lives. Until now conservative Christians have been the strongest bulwark against this tendency. Mischievously, Thomas and Dobson now urge them to withdraw from the fray." Dobson suggests that Christians should close their independent schools and send their children to the government schools where they can serve as a leaven. Hitchcock is not impressed: "But when they do, they are not to press their own agenda, such as formal prayer, which Dobson opposes. Neither are they to be critics of official school policies, which would be the kind of 'unloving' behavior the authors condemn. Evidently Christians' sole moral duty to the schools is to be cooperative. This is a view indistinguishable from that of the American Civil Liberties Union or People for the American Way, the antireligious group founded by Thomas' friend Norman Lear." There is a touch of impatience, but I think it is justified impatience, in Hitchcock's conclusion: "Thomas and Dobson's achievement is to offer Christians specious theological arguments why they should willingly cooperate in their own disenfranchisement."

■ Now that some of the dust has settled, I note that much of the press is in a no-hard-feelings mode toward Kenneth Starr. After trashing, slashing, and slandering him as a prosecutorial zealot, a religious fanatic, a partisan run amok, and a host of other very bad things, the *New Republic* and others tell us that he is really a very decent and capable guy who did the best that could be done with an independent prosecutor law that he himself had always opposed. So he isn't the Devil incarnate after all. That's good to know. As for Starr, in the aftermath of the impeachment, he has been nothing less than magnanimous. This in an interview with *World*: "I have values and beliefs. I am unashamedly a Christian. At the same time, I recognize that an individual called upon to carry on a responsibility has to be professional in carrying out that responsibility. If anything, the Christian perspective calls upon one to be more gracious, more understanding, and kinder than would a completely non-biblical perspective. . . . It is decidedly un-Christian to try to win at any cost." As to the politicians involved and what the process tells us about the system, his magnanimity may be something of a stretch: "Whether one agrees or disagrees with the result, the process ran its course. The elected representatives of a vast democracy weighed for many weeks whether the elected President should be removed from office. . . . Not a single shot was fired, not a single tank took to the streets. Voices were raised and feelings ran high, but we worked our way through that ultimate governance question in a peaceful and orderly way. That is a great tribute to the wisdom of the structure of government that was given to us at the founding." Will history judge him kindly? Starr seems not to be overly anxious on that score. "I don't have a crystal ball. History will do what history will do. But I do know what the facts are: the President betrayed his moral trust with the American people. He betrayed it badly. He lied to the American people, and he lied in a court of law. That is a permanent blot on our government and on his stewardship specifically. It was my lot to be the cop on the beat. I was an honest cop."

■ I am struck by the advertisement that appears in evangelical magazines for Westminster Theological Seminary, the Presbyterian school in Philadelphia that is very much in the Anglo-Scot tradition of strait-laced orthodoxy. It has a big picture of founder

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J. Gresham Machen, the formidable warrior against sundry modernisms who died in 1937. Beneath the picture, Dr. Machen asserts: "The Bible, which testifies of Christ, is the centre and core of that with which Westminster Seminary has to do." One is inevitably reminded of Churchill's response upon being reminded not to end sentences with a preposition: "That is pedantry up with which I will not put." *Pace* D. G. Hart and other Westminster worthies, this is not a theological objection. But isn't there a way to present this fine school that steers between the breezy and the starchy? (Incidental note: in double-checking Machen's dates, I discover there is no entry for him in the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church.* A major oversight.)

■ So why are some conservatives so obsessed by sexual questions? It is a question frequently asked, and Joel Belz of *World* magazine has one not bad answer: "I have friends who wonder why some of us keep worrying about the issues of homosexuality and abortion. Why not put a little focus, they say, on the sins of racism and economic oppression? To which I think we need to respond: real as racism and economic oppression may be, I don't know many folks who defend them as morally right. We may be insufficiently motivated and poorly mobilized to undo them—but at least we're not running around claiming that racism is a virtue and that economic oppression should be expanded."

■ As with the weather, everybody complains about contemporary church architecture but nobody is doing anything about it. Well, not quite everybody. I suppose some contemporary church architects are pleased with what they have wrought. And it is not quite true that nobody is doing anything about it. There is, for instance, Professor Duncan Stroik, who with his colleagues at the University of Notre Dame has established a vibrant center for rethinking and reclaiming sacred space. With Italian partners, they have published a bilingual and beautifully illustrated book of 150 pages that demonstrates what is being done and what might be done in architecture that appropriates the fullness of tradition in a contemporary mode. Information about *Riconquistare Lo Spazio Sacro/Reconquering Sacred Space* and related initiatives may be obtained by writing Prof. Stroik at University of Notre Dame, Department of Architecture, Bond Hall, Notre Dame, Indiana 46556.

■ Different and sometimes contradictory purposes are served by exaggerating what is commonly termed the "vocations crisis" in the Catholic priesthood. There are conservatives who inflate the problem as further evidence of all that has gone wrong since the Second Vatican Council, and progressives who happily join in the inflation to support their proposed solution—married priests and the ordination of women. Not surprisingly, many in the media seize upon the "crisis" as an additional sign that the Catholic Church—and, by extension, Christianity—is on a course of inevitable disarray and decline. These games have been going on for several decades now, and all the players are well practiced in their lines. The reality is somewhat different. At a recent press conference in Rome, Cardinal Dario Castrillon Hoyos, prefect of the Congregation for the Clergy, presented statistics from the last twenty-five years that demonstrate, he said, that the vocations crisis, if that is what it was, is now past. In 1975, he noted, there were 60,000 seminarians studying for the priesthood, while at the end of 1999 there were 110,000, an increase of over 80 percent. In 1975, there were 6,600 ordinations, compared with nearly 9,000 in 1997. The number of priests who left active ministry between 1974 and 1997 has also been greatly exaggerated, with reports frequently counting those who died or retired because of old age. In fact, says the Cardinal, about 1 percent left between 1974 and 1997. "It is not really that big a number, but the press has made it seem big, and in our hearts it feels big," he said. Of those who left, more than 9,500 have been readmitted to the priestly ministry, and many other applications for readmission are under study. The figures offered by the Cardinal are, of course, for the universal Church. The picture in the U.S. is spotty, with some dioceses overflowing with vocations while others fall far short of enough ordinations to maintain replacement level. In most dioceses, however, bishops express confidence about increasing numbers of vocations in the years ahead. The decline in vocations that hit bottom about twenty-five years ago has also occasioned rethinking about the responsibilities that require a priest. During the same years, there has been a sharp increase in the number of permanent deacons and lay ministries, especially in administrative and educational positions, and many think that is all to the good, while others worry that priests are being too narrowly confined to sacramental duties, turning them into presiders over what some call a sacramental assembly line. There is no precise formula for the right ratio of priests to people. In the U.S., the active Catholic population continues to increase, and in some dioceses the fear of "full pews, empty altars" that was so much discussed twenty years ago still seems very real. This is notably the case in rural areas and in smaller

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parishes. Whether in the U.S. or worldwide, however, it is not accurate to speak of a "vocations crisis." There will always be a need for more priests, even as the Church, cultivating the expansion of the permanent diaconate and lay ministries, continues to redefine the tasks that require a priest. There is, and will always be, more than enough work for everyone. One recalls the words of Jesus about the abundance of the harvest and the scarcity of laborers. While it is a great sadness of recent decades that many men who had a priestly vocation did not fulfill their calling, the larger picture is one of sometimes painful but also promising development. Change should not be confused with crisis.

■ Over many years now, Daniel Callahan has been one of the most incisive commentators on medicine and morality. A cofounder and first president of the Hastings Center, he is a pioneer of biomedical ethics, a perhaps inevitable specialty of which he has also become an intelligent critic. His most recent book is *False Hopes* (Simon & Schuster, 330 pp., $24) and the subtitle is an apt summary of its argument: "Why America's Quest for Perfect Health Is a Recipe for Failure." Callahan makes a persuasive case that the "war" against mortality is futile and wrongheaded; he urges us to accept a "natural life span" aided by "decent" but not unlimited medical care. He effectively debunks the exaggerated claims for medical achievements and the delusions of "perfect health," offering a thorough critique of the hope for technological breakthroughs driven by the dynamics of the market. His arguments for accepting the limits of the human condition and a "steady-state" system of medicine attuned to those limits are filled with moral wisdom, but they are weakened by his failure to explain why present or significantly increased U.S. expenditures on medicine are not economically sustainable and by his nostalgia for the Western European and Canadian models of government-directed medical care that he recognizes are not economically sustainable. Throughout, he advocates a sense of moral and social "solidarity" that many believe has been shattered, not least by the unlimited abortion license that Callahan helped to establish by his influential 1970 study, *Abortion: Law, Choice, and Morality*. This is, then, an important but deeply flawed book. Callahan recognizes the threat of Huxley's "brave new world" that is posed by unchecked technology and market forces, but seems incapable of mustering the strong moral arguments that are needed to undergird the solidarity required to resist that threat. Further, if death is the unqualified annihilation that Callahan suggests it is, people will understandably demand the utmost medical aid in resisting such an unmitigated catastrophe. Against the "false hopes" of medicine and technology, Callahan posits the wan hope that a politically effective majority will be persuaded to embrace his Stoic acceptance of inevitable limits, along with increased government regulation and rationing of health care. It does not seem very probable and, upon closer examination, does not seem desirable. Callahan admires the Western European sense of limits, but fails to ask whether that might be a part of why the societies of Western Europe are committing demographic suicide. Nonetheless, as a critique of much that is wrong with medicine in this country, *False Hopes* is a book that both informs and invites argument about questions of increasing consequence.

■ In Poland, where 95 percent of the thirty-nine million people are Catholic, the government is worried about new religious sects. The interesting thing is, according to the Keston Institute, which monitors religion in Central and Eastern Europe, that the Catholic bishops apparently do not share the worry. Following the example of John Paul II, they are working hard at improving relations with the thirteen Christian denominations in Poland, which range from the 570,000 member Orthodox Church to the Baptist Union with its 7,000 members. Altogether, 139 religious groups are officially registered with the government, including seven Muslim, nine Hindu, and fourteen Buddhist. Stimulated by anxieties about sects in neighboring countries in the West, the government established an Inter-Ministerial Team on New Religious Movements, which has a budget and a few bureaucrats with nothing better to worry about. Better the government should relax and follow the example of the bishops.

■ No, I do not have a thing about Orlando; it's just that Orlando keeps doing these things. Now there is "The Holy Land Experience," which is described as "A Living, Biblical Museum." The ad declares, "It's been 2000 years since the world has seen anything like this." Really? They mean it is not like the Holy Land after all? Earnest advice: save up for another year and go experience the real thing.

■ An impertinent Jesuit who teaches in Rome has come up with a "Post-Conciliar Catholic Lexicon." Herewith a few of the items that are publishable in a family magazine:

Ultramontanist: Priest who wears clerical garb even when not en route to his arraignment.

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Prophet: One who exposes the misbehavior of conservatives.
Scandalmonger: One who exposes the misbehavior of liberals.
Rosary: Beaded chain of unknown origin used to bind the hands of deceased clergymen in coffins.
Liturgical Participation: Process by which the faithful forfeit the prerogative to object to ritual innovations instituted by persons with master's degrees.
Active Participation: Silent endurance.
Sin of Sodom: Inhospitality, as in Lot's wife entertaining his guests with pretzel nuggets and celery sticks filled with generic cream cheese and saving the salted almonds and brie en croute for herself, thus bringing divine annihilation upon her fellow townsfolk.
Detraction: The sin of telling the truth about the lies told by a bishop.
Principle of Subsidiarity: The doctrine that decisions affecting the common good should be made at the lowest level of presumptive authority and enforced by the highest level of ecclesiastical discipline congruent to effecting the displacement of Catholic social doctrine with that of Whoopi Goldberg.
Five Glorious Mysteries: Dialogue, dynamic equivalence, recycling, diversity, and inclusive language.

Our Jesuit friend has never been accused of being one of those humorless conservatives.

■ Some while back the *New York Times Magazine* did a remarkable story on the Scheibners, a large evangelical family in Pennsylvania. They homeschool and generally live a life of "selective separatism"—voting, paying taxes, working in the mainstream (he is an American Airlines pilot), and doing community service, but, as Mrs. Scheibner puts it, not participating "in those parts of the culture that do not bring glory to God." The article was generally positive, the author noting that "it is hard not to see the Scheibners, conservative and law-abiding though they are, as rebels." Writing in the liberal *Christian Century,* Miroslav Volf of Yale writes that mainliners tend to dismiss people such as the Scheibners for being reactionary and fundamentalist. That, he says, is a mistake. "If we can neither state what the gospel is nor have a clear notion of what constitutes the good life, we will more or less simply float along, like jellyfish with the tide. True, a belief in our ability to shape the wider culture is woven into the fabric of our identity. So we complain and we act. But in the absence of determinate beliefs and practices, our criticism and activism will be little more than one more way of floating along."

■ Thirty years ago, New York State passed, by one vote in the assembly, a bill legalizing most abortions. The *New York Times* had a big and celebrative front-page story, "'70 Abortion Law: New York Said Yes, Stunning the Nation." A hero of the story is George M. Michaels, who represented a dominantly Catholic district but "voted his conscience" after being pressed on the issue by his son, a rabbinical student. The *Times* view of Catholic politicians was very different. Father James T. Burtchaell examined the *Times* coverage at the time and, in his 1982 book *Rachel Weeping, and Other Essays on Abortion,* wrote this: "Catholic readers and others could not help noticing that Catholics were expected to vote out of conformity, while a Jewish legislator was praised for having voted out of conscience against his constituents' presumed wishes. When they vote against abortion because of their own convictions, Catholics are dogmatic; when they do so to accommodate their constituents, they are craven. When non-Catholics vote against abortion because of their own convictions, they are unintelligible; when they do so to accommodate their constituents, they are under intense pressure. Put otherwise: when a majority want abortion from their legislators, that is democracy; when a majority do not want abortion, they follow what the *Times* calls 'the politics of punishment.'" It is thirty years later and not much has changed.

■ Are Christianity and Judaism two different religions, or is it more accurate to say that they constitute a continuing disagreement within the history of one religion? That is among the questions addressed by Scott Bader-Saye's *Church and Israel After Christendom: The Politics of Election* (Westview). (See FT review by David B. Hart, August/September.) George Lindbeck of Yale, writing in *Theology Today,* highlights one important aspect of the question addressed by the book: "It argues that God has unconditionally elected Israel and the Church to be the first fruits of God's promise to bless all humankind in that redemptive seed of Abraham that is Israel and above all, Christians believe, Jesus Christ. The two portions of this divided people now live, however, in different parts of their shared story, separated overwhelmingly during most of their joint history by the sins of Christians. They share the same covenant: The 'new' testament intensifies rather than replaces the 'old' even in the Epistle to the

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Hebrews, not to mention Jeremiah. To suppose that there are two covenants, whether of the traditional successive type (as N. T. Wright maintains) or of the liberal parallel variety (as the late Paul van Buren proposed), is 'to insulate the Church's identity and mission from any necessary engagement with the Jews.' That, in turn, is to deny in practice even if not doctrinal theory that Christians believe and worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jesus. 'Israel's God is Trinity' for Christians because to deny this is the worst kind of supersessionism, the Marcionite heresy that Israel's God is not their own."

■ Three well-respected Protestant scholars noted for their work on religion and ethics decline to be interviewed for a television discussion dealing with same-sex marriage and the ordination of gays and lesbians. They have carefully developed positions in opposition to both. But they don't want to talk about it publicly, and they ask Peter Steinfels of the *New York Times* not to reveal their names in his story on why they don't want to talk about it. Anticipating how television would handle it, one scholar says it would be "Here's Mr. Compassion, and here's me." The fear is that they would be tarred with the brush of "homophobia," and, once that label is applied, whatever they have to say about anything else (homosexuality is hardly their main subject) would be discredited. Steinfels writes: "As thoughtful conservatives—at least on this issue—these three theologians confront not only media simplification but also the ideological intolerance and labeling rampant in university environments and the polarized atmosphere within the churches. Measured liberals may well face similar pressures: condemnations from angry conservatives on the other side and criticism from dissatisfied militants on their own. American culture is hypersensitive to censorship. What truly constrains full and open public discussion, however, may be far more subtle but no less effective." But, of course, it is censorship, and of a very thuggish sort. When our Ramsey Colloquium published its very careful but clear statement, "The Homosexual Movement" (March 1994), reports reached us from several campuses that gay activists had stolen that issue of FT from libraries. Gilbert Meilaender, who was then a professor at excruciatingly correct Oberlin College, signed the statement and offered a vivid report on the unpleasant consequences in "Bringing One's Life to a Point" (November 1994). A professor at one of our most distinguished universities finally declined to sign because it would jeopardize his grant applications to major foundations. A lawyer at a prestigious law firm said she could not sign because any suggestion that she had moral or other objections to the homosexual movement would make the firm vulnerable to a future anti-discrimination suit. It would also prevent her from being made a partner, which has since happened. Tufts University has "decertified" an evangelical student group that refused to accept a lesbian activist as its leader. To their shame, other religious groups on campus—including those, such as the Catholic ministry, that at least formally disapprove of homosexual acts—have remained silent. (As of this writing, the group has been reinstated provisionally, pending a final decision by the student court later this fall.) The message is that even the most temperate and respectful expression of viewpoints that dissent from gay orthodoxy are beyond the pale. Let the record show that—on many campuses, in the media, and in other sectors of our society, including the churches—the homosexual movement is the most extreme, fanatical, nasty, and effective agent of censorship today. It operates not by argument but by intimidation. And the unhappy fact is that most people are easily intimidated. Such is the circumstance created by a movement incessantly declaring its devotion to inclusiveness, openness, sensitivity, and uncloseted honesty. Only ten years ago, the standard plea of the movement was, "Can't we talk about it?" Today the plea has become the edict, "We'll talk and you'll shut up." I continue to hope that the liberal tradition, rightly understood, will recover its nerve, at least in the university. I have been told that I am naive on that score, and maybe I am.

■ It's a matter of ignorance, says one party, to which another says it is a matter of arrogance, but I do not think we need choose between these explanations; ignorance safeguards arrogance, and arrogance provides immunity against the embarrassment of ignorance. The discussion is occasioned by philosopher Simon Blackburn's review of philosopher Hilary Putnam's most recent book, *The Threefold Cord: Mind, Body, and World* (Columbia University Press). The review appears in the *New Republic*, thus involving its book editor, along with Mr. Blackburn, in our search for the most adequate explanation. In the course of a long, somewhat catty, and self-consciously clever dissection, Mr. Blackburn finally gets to what he really does not like about Mr. Putnam. "I have heard it said, unkindly or not, that Putnam's project in recent years has been to make the world safe for religion." Unkindly or not? In the intellectual quarters frequented by Mr. Blackburn, it seems most unlikely that anyone would say such a thing kindly. Such a statement made in almost any

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academic quarters would certainly be taken as a put-down, suggesting as it does that Mr. Putnam's philosophical cerebrations are tainted by ulterior motive or prejudice. In this case, the taint is damning indeed. Mr. Blackburn reminds us of the "attitudes that cling to the religious spirit, such as exclusiveness, sanctimoniousness, sectarianism, hostility to science, admiration for wishful thinking." Not only that, but religious beliefs are "true or false" and, upon critical examination, "many of them are then found wanting or even risible." Say it ain't so, Simon. That such stuff and nonsense can still appear in a frequently respectable publication at the beginning of the twenty-first century is worth noticing. Perhaps it is part of *TNR*'s devotion to protecting endangered species, such as the village atheist of yore. Mr. Blackburn does not specify whether he is deploring the spirit of Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Secular Scientism, or just the spirit of "religion in general." (On the incoherence of religion in general, see Paul Griffiths' "The Very Idea of Religion" in the May issue.) Hilary Putnam, in the tradition of William James and Wittgenstein, suggests that there may be more to reality and to our discernment of reality than is dreamt of in reductionist philosophies, but Mr. Blackburn is having none of it. How very small, quaint, and now increasingly fetid seems that intellectual enclave of defiant souls declaring their liberation from "the religious spirit." How desperately they heap upon that spirit bigotry's catalogue of reproaches. I do not know Simon Blackburn personally, and he may be a decent and intelligent fellow—he could even be a devout Christian or Jew—who made the mistake of knocking out a review on a day when he was quite unhinged by goodness knows what that went wrong. Whoever made the editorial decision to run the piece, however, presumably had more than a day to consider the wisdom of going public with a blast of platitudinous prejudice for which the little world of academic philosophy is still, unfortunately, a safe place.

■ Another premature obituary, or so it seems. In recent decades, there has been much talk about post-denominational religion, meaning that people are largely indifferent to labels such as Presbyterian, Methodist, or Baptist. According to the Hartford Institute for Religion Research, that is the case when local clergy and lay leaders are indifferent to their denominational connection, but the larger picture is that local churches do care. "They use their own denominations' educational materials, eschewing that of nondenominational, generic publishers. They carefully nurture their denominational patterns of worship, with their hymns, liturgy, and prayers closely allied with their larger traditions. The loyalists tend to identify their denominational mission with that of the larger church. They are involved in supporting global programs sponsored largely by their own mission and relief agencies." Perhaps too much attention has been paid the Protestant "megachurches" that are usually and determinedly nondenominational, while religion-watchers have been slighting what goes on at First Presbyterian on the corner of Main and Olive Streets.

■ We ran a generally positive notice of Robert Kaplan's new book *The Coming Anarchy* (Random House), commending it for its anti-utopian realism about world affairs. Robert Kagan, who sometimes teams up with William Kristol of the *Weekly Standard* in promoting a vaulting vision of Pax Americana, does not like the book at all. He writes in the *New Republic*: "The real tragedy is that Kaplan's realism precludes him from making the only appeal that can plausibly be made to the inhabitants of the world's stretch limousines: the appeal of universal morality and common humanity. Why should we care what happens in West Africa? Kaplan tries to appeal to us on the pragmatic, material grounds of realism. If we do not pay attention, he warns, we will lose money, we will lose security, we will become sick with disease. Many realists believe that these arguments are not only legitimate, but also that they are the only arguments that are likely to persuade. They are wrong on both counts. The most powerful reason why Western liberals, why all Westerners, should care about West Africans is that they are human. And to the extent that we are indifferent to their suffering, to the extent that we would be complicit in denying them the natural, universal rights that we enjoy, we ourselves become less human." Kagan has an important point, as does Kaplan. We should not have to choose, however, between the latter's amoral realism and the former's penchant for crusading moralism. Statecraft, one may be permitted to suggest, should be marked by a morally informed realism that presses toward what is possible under the conditions of a fallen world in which we tirelessly speak truth to power while knowing that force must be countered by force. I am not sure that Kagan would disagree with that, and am inclined to agree with him that Kaplan would.

■ The day after *Stenberg*, the 5-4 Supreme Court decision approving partial-birth abortion, the *New York Times* ran a story on its political impact, noting that "the Republicans' embrace in the last few years of eliminating late-term abortion allowed the party

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to maintain its anti-abortion position in a way that is more palatable to many voters than suggesting overturning the constitutional amendment allowing abortion." Say what? It is true that, under a regime of the judicial usurpation of politics, the Court is in fact amending the Constitution with some regularity, but we have not quite reached the point where an election held among nine unelected lawyers is the same thing as a constitutional amendment, which requires a two-thirds majority in both houses of Congress and ratification by three-fourths of the states. What the Republican platform calls for, of course, is a constitutional amendment overturning the Court's 1973 arrogation of power in *Roe v Wade.*

■ Parts of James Burtchaell's acclaimed book *The Dying of the Light,* which tells the story of the disengagement of Christian higher education from Christianity, first appeared in these pages. The book played a significant part in the Catholic bishops' overwhelming approval of the norms for implementing *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (From the Heart of the Church), which aims at reconnecting Catholic colleges and universities with Catholicism. The Holy Cross fathers, who run the University of Notre Dame, are not at all happy with Father Burtchaell, and he has been ordered not to speak or write on the questions addressed by the book. Fr. Edward T. Oakes, writing in *Commonweal,* observes: "When the nation's most articulate defender of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* is silenced, Catholics can at least be amused at this extra fillip of irony: that liberal academics in Catholic universities and their sponsoring religious orders are resorting to the very tactics that have made [several maverick twentieth-century theologians] the heroes of theological liberalism!"

■ Garry Wills, I fear, is becoming increasingly crotchety and downright nasty in his treatment of John Paul II and the Church. But he is the *New York Review of Books'* in-house expert on all things Catholic. In a recent issue he offers an over-the-top version of the teaching that the Church is composed of sinners but is herself sinless. That, and the teaching that the Church should forgive sinners as Christ forgave sinners, is, he writes, "blasphemous" and a "deifying" of the Church. John Paul's many confessions of wrongs done by the children of the Church are, says Wills, instances of "apology as propaganda," aimed at making the Church look good. "They are asymptotic moves toward truth, which by definition do not reach it." Asymptotic! That's a low blow, even for Garry Wills. He complains that the Pope has not apologized for Pius XI's censuring of an obscure interreligious dialogue called Friends of Israel back in 1928 because it compromised Catholic doctrine. Why do I have the feeling that, if John Paul mentioned that and fifty other particulars, Mr. Wills would come up with yet another particular that the Pope did not mention? Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, said shortly before the Pope's pilgrimage to Israel: "It is surely inappropriate to greet a heartfelt act of contrition with a pointed reminder of every act of wrongdoing that I think may have been left off the list. If every step forward is greeted with an attack, there is little incentive for additional steps to be taken." Rabbi Yoffie was criticizing other Jewish organizations that refuse to take yes for an answer, but his point is as pertinent to the case of Mr. Wills. Israeli novelist Amos Oz said of the Pope in the Holy Land, "Generations on generations of Jews would have paid I know not what to have seen what we were part of today in Jerusalem. It is an epochal turning point, a revolution of great historical consequences." Not so fast, says Garry Wills. The Church is still "lagging behind others in the recognition of such historical wrongs as the Inquisition, the war on science, the denigration of women, and the failure to denounce pogroms." In fact, the Church, and John Paul in particular, have on many occasions addressed each of those subjects. It is not simply that Mr. Wills has not been paying attention; he seems to believe that contrition is not genuine unless self-accusations top the accusations of the most extreme anti-Catholic defamation. It has been said that suicide is the most sincere form of self-criticism, and it does seem that Mr. Wills, a Catholic, will not be satisfied until the Church apologizes for being Catholic. His curious role at the *New York Review* is to tell Jews and others that they should not accept Catholic contrition at face value. "We are much worse than you think!" he insists. But of course he means not "we" but "they." What Mr. Wills has been doing for years in the *New York Review* he has recently perpetrated at book length in *Papal Sin: The Structure of Deceit* (see Russell Hittinger's review in Briefly Noted, FT, August/September).

■ The South African novelist J. M. Coetzee was invited to give Princeton's Tanner Lecture on "human values" and went about it in an interesting way. He produced a story in which an aging novelist, called Elizabeth Costello, gives just such a lecture and chooses the topic of animal rights, advocating a position with which Mr. Coetzee is clearly sympathetic, as he has shown in his book *The Lives of Animals* (Princeton University Press). Roger Scruton,

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editor of the *Salisbury Review*, comments: "Ms. Costello argues that human beings and animals are so alike that the breeding of animals for meat, and the mass slaughter of the product, are not to be distinguished from the mass murders of the Holocaust. (The comparison provokes an understandably angry response from an old Jewish poet in Costello's audience.) Costello's arguments hinge on rhetorical questions, designed to shift the burden of proof. 'What is so special,' she asks, 'about the form of consciousness we recognize that makes killing a bearer of it a crime, while killing an animal goes unpunished?' Like Pilate, she does not stay for an answer. In any case, what she needs is not an answer but another question: 'What is so special about the form of consciousness of a cat that enables it to kill incessantly without committing a crime?' Such a question reminds us of the real difference between human beings and other animals: we are moral beings, they are not. We have knowledge of right and wrong, they do not. We are judged, they are not. We have duties, they do not. And—as an inescapable corollary—we have rights, they do not. Of course, that is only the first step. But the amazing thing, to me, is that the step is not taken either by Ms. Costello or by her immediate critics. The reason for this is clear. If we begin the debate as I have begun it, we are led at once into difficult areas of metaphysics. We must now explore the concepts of freedom, personality, and obligation, so as to understand how we, who are only animals, are nevertheless bound by obligations which we cannot escape. To make sense of this requires hard philosophical work; and this work is never engaged in by the defenders of animal rights, for whom emotional release is far too important to be compromised by reasoned reflection." Cruelty to animals is, of course, a terrible thing: because it causes pain to the animal (only those who have never cared for an animal quibble about that), because it debases the human being who perpetrates it, and because it transgresses human criteria of morality. Scruton concludes: "The interesting thing about Ms. Costello is that she is troubled only by likenesses, and only by those that fuel her self-indulgent emotions. She keeps cats, but shows no awareness of the likeness between cats and serial killers, or of the resemblance between keeping a pet and keeping a sex-slave. Everything that she observes is carefully tailored to reinforce her contempt for other humans. And in this, at least, she is an accurate portrait of the typical campaigner for animal rights." "Contempt for other humans" may not be "typical" of such campaigners, but they do, with distressing regularity and incoherence, pit the moral status of animals against the moral status of human beings when it is only and inescapably to the morality of human beings that they appeal. Presumably Ms. Costello does not lecture her cat on the rights of mice.

■ Vice President Gore's understanding of the oath to "preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution" is in need of "some clarification," as the National Association of Evangelicals delicately puts it. The NAE cites Gore's statement that he "would look for Justices of the Supreme Court who understand that our Constitution is a living and breathing document, that it was intended by our Founders to be interpreted in the light of the constantly evolving experience of the American people." That view of a "living" Constitution, says the NAE, reduces it to what Jefferson called "a blank sheet of paper." "If activist judges are free to read into the Constitution their own predilections, the people, as Lincoln said, 'cease to be their own rulers.' The Founders recognized that changes in the Constitution would be necessary from time to time, and therefore included an amendment process. That is how changes were to take place in our representative democracy, not under some 'living' Constitution rubric that permits unelected judges to decide what is good for us. In short, the Supreme Court was never intended to sit as a kind of continuing constitutional convention. Judicial activism—whether of the liberal or conservative stripe—cannot be squared with rule by 'we the people.'" I confess to being a bit puzzled when people ask whether the debate over the judicial usurpation of politics is over. When it is over, the American experiment in representative democracy will be over.

■ So what's new to be said about "the religious right"? Well, there is this thought from Norman Podhoretz, former editor of *Commentary*, on the way the religious right is a barrier to what he calls the complete triumph of relativism and libertinism. "On this latter issue, I have long suspected that there is a parallel between the attitudes of many liberals today and the way the French took shelter under the American nuclear umbrella during the Cold War while simultaneously gratifying themselves with luxuriant outbursts of contempt against us. Such liberals, I think, are not quite so unhappy as they profess to be that there is a force in this country whose very existence helps set limits to libertine tendencies that they themselves worry about, especially when they have children, but that they do not know how to restrain and would lack the courage to fight even if they were in command of the

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necessary arguments. And so they rely on the 'nuclear umbrella' of the Christian right, while denouncing it all the more loudly as they quietly benefit from its protection."

■ At their general conference in May, the United Methodists adopted guidelines specifying that members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) wishing to become Methodists must undergo instruction in the Christian faith and be baptized. Were it not for a recent brouhaha in these pages, that would hardly seem worthy of note.

■ A sometime FT contributor, Professor Beau Weston, spotted this item. According to the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, the Harrison County Council in Indiana voted to give $52,000 to St. Joseph Catholic School. The money comes from the Caesar's Riverboat Casino. The paper reports that the attorney for the council says "they don't see a problem with giving the money to St. Joseph because it was generated by Caesar's, not by direct tax imposed by the county." Render unto God what is Caesar's.

■ Father Avery Dulles examines whether there really is a "development of doctrine" in Catholic teaching on capital punishment. John Coons of the University of California at Berkeley detects a "populist redemption" in the surging movement for parental choice in education. Notre Dame's Steven D. Smith makes a convincing case that some of the most respectable legal scholars writing today cannot really believe what they say about the judicial displacement of democracy. Faithful subscribers will not miss such forthcoming treasures, but what about those less fortunate folk? We will be happy to send a sample issue of this journal to people you think are likely subscribers. Please send names and addresses to FIRST THINGS, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, New York 10010 (or e-mail to subscriberservices@pma-inc.net). On the other hand, if they're ready to subscribe, call toll-free 1-800-783-4903.

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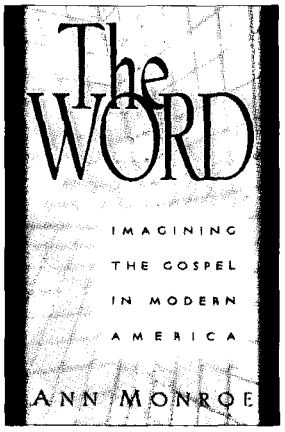


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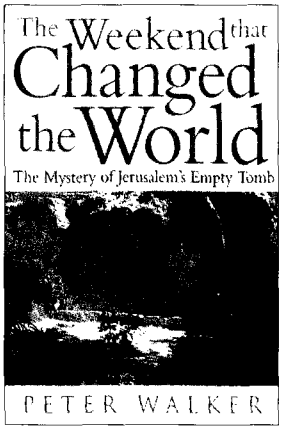


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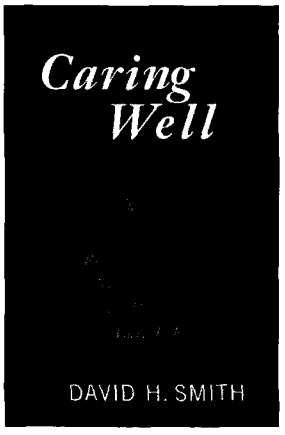


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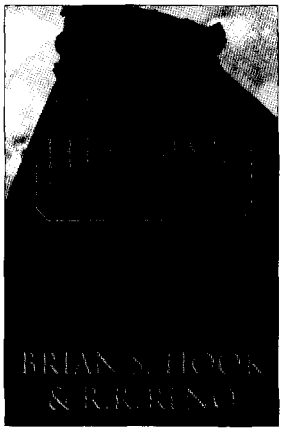

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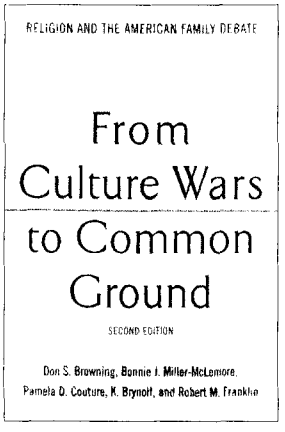


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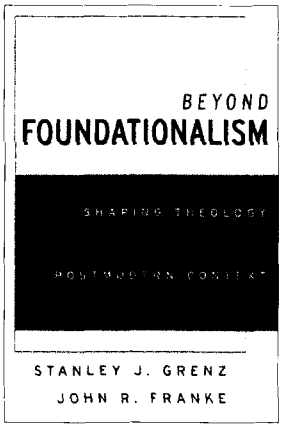


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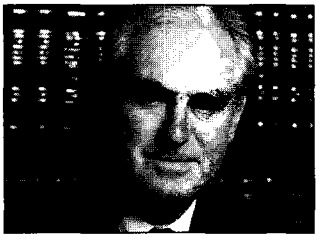

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